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REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME ONE

The Silver King
The Middleman
Judah
The Dancing Girl

VOLUME TWO

The Crusaders
The Tempter
The Masqueraders
The Case of Rebellious Susan

VOLUME THREE

Michael and His Lost Angel
The Liars
Mrs. Dane's Defence
The Hypocrites

VOLUME FOUR

Dolly Reforming Herself
The Divine Gift
Mary Goes First
The Goal
Grace Mary

Photo H. Walter Barnett

HENRY ARTHUR JONES IN 1910.

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

EDITED, WITH HISTORICAL, BIOGRAPHICAL, AND CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS, BY

CLAYTON HAMILTON

VOLUME TWO

THE CRUSADERS
THE TEMPTER
THE MASQUERADERS
THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN

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LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1925

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INTRODUCTION

For Henry Arthur Jones, the early years of the decade of the eighteen-nineties were years of experiment, in which he tried his hand at several different types of drama, as if he were deliberately seeking the logical line for his future development. For such experimenting he was particularly fitted by his innate faculty for story-telling — a faculty in which he has excelled all the other English playwrights of his time. In the plays of Mr. Bernard Shaw, for instance, sheer story-telling has counted for comparatively little; and it has counted for less and less as his mannerism of the propagandist has developed, until, in recent years, his plays have scarcely told a story at all. Sir James Barrie has always contented himself with narrative materials that have been very simple and very slight, and has depended, for his effect, on his peculiarly personal method of gloating over his materials. Although Mr. John Galsworthy is a novelist, he does not naturally use the drama as a medium for telling tales: indeed, he starts a play with a theme, and then artificially, though artfully, invents a story that shall, at all points, exemplify his thesis. Though Sir Arthur Pinero is a fairly inventive story-teller, he is more interested in the technical process of dramatising a story than in the story itself; and for some of his best plays — like "The Thunderbolt", for instance — he has frankly used familiar and tradi-

tional materials, with the deliberate purpose of extracting from them a greater amount of dramatic effect than had ever been squeezed out of them before. But story-telling has always come naturally and easily to Henry Arthur Jones; and it is evident that, if he had not devoted his entire life to the theatre, he would have been a prolific novelist.

I remember now that, a year or two before the Great War, when Mr. Jones was about to sail from New York for a visit of a month or two to Bermuda, I asked him if he intended to write a play while he was there, and, if so, what subject he intended to deal with. To this question he replied that he probably would write a play while he was in Bermuda; but that, as yet, he could not tell which one of several projects he would turn his hand to. He then told me that, though he had produced approximately sixty plays, he had already invented stories for at least twenty more, and had jotted down these inventions in note-books to jog his memory. All that he needed, to write any of these future plays, was time; and it did not particularly matter in what order he took up the stories that were awaiting his attention.

"THE CRUSADERS"

Concerning "The Crusaders", Mr. Jones himself has written: "After the great popular success of 'The Dancing Girl', I produced 'The Crusaders.' I gave William Morris *carte blanche* for the scenery and furniture, and he advised me on the whole production. I engaged the best possible

cast, filling even the small parts with actors of great ability. It was hooted and booed, and again I met with the general condemnation of the London press. I lost four thousand pounds, and had to go out and collect the general public around me again."

"The Crusaders" was produced on November 2, 1891; and there is a certain irony in the fact — which, incidentally, may serve as a lesson to other playwrights — that, though Henry Arthur Jones has derived a large fortune from the royalties of a great many successful plays, he lost heavily on the one occasion when he appeared before the public as a producing manager. More significant, however, is the fact that, on this occasion, he called into collaboration the most famous decorative artist of the time. Stage scenery, in 1891, had not yet come to be considered as an art; and, in making an alliance with William Morris, Mr. Jones was clearly prophesying the importance which the stage designer has assumed as a contributor to the drama of more recent decades.

"The Crusaders" was published in 1892, with a critical preface by William Archer; and the author's intentions in this piece were clearly stated by Mr. Archer in the following paragraph:

"What description of play has Mr. Jones set forth to write? He calls 'The Crusaders' a comedy; but from the word 'comedy' we nowadays learn nothing more definite than that the stage is not drenched in gore. 'Satirical romance' would perhaps fit the play as exactly as any label of equal brevity. That is to say, it is not primarily a drama of individual character, but a sketch of a

social group, a study of a certain intellectual and emotional tendency in modern life. In this it differs from the most notable of Mr. Jones's previous works. 'Judah' and 'The Dancing Girl' were, or ought to have been, dramas of individual character. They obviously sprang from the conception of the spiritual enthusiast and the half-innocent charlatan, the reprobate duke and 'the beautiful pagan.' In 'The Crusaders', on the other hand, the conception of the *milieu* evidently preceded and conditioned that of the plot and characters. The germ of the play in the author's mind was not a personage or a situation, but a theme — that of social idealism."

In this respect, "The Crusaders", though financially unfortunate, seems to have started a fashion in the early eighteen-nineties. It was almost precisely contemporary with Pinero's "The Times" (1891), which was followed by "The Amazons" in 1893; and it antedated by a year or two Shaw's first play, "Widowers' Houses" (1892), and his second effort, "The Philanderer" (1893). All these were comedies of social groups, in which the authors satirised certain intellectual and emotional tendencies in the life that was current at the time.

In "The Crusaders", as in "Judah", the leading love-relation lies between a worldly woman and an unworldly man. But, although the passionate idealist is a sympathetic figure when, as in the case of Judah Llewellyn, we are permitted to take him seriously, he becomes ridiculous when he is satirised, as in the case of Philos Ingarfield, who is described in the dialogue as "a sort of Shelley from Peckham Rye." I have always thought this was

the main reason for the failure of the play. The love-relation between Cynthia Greenslade and Philos Ingarfield is developed into a serious intrigue in the final act; but to this intrigue the spectators cannot give a serious response because they have been invited in the two preceding acts to regard the extravagance of Philos as absurd.

Also, as Mr. Archer has pointed out, " The Crusaders " is " patently fantastic " and does not easily evoke that " provisional credence " with which the public always desires to contemplate a play, whatever be its species. As Mr. Archer has said, " It sets forth events which purport to be, but are not, matters of history. They may be more or less possible and probable, but their ' factual ' unreality is obvious from the outset."

Running through the cast of characters of " The Crusaders ", we shall notice that, although the leading figures — such as Cynthia Greenslade, Philos Ingarfield, Una Dell, Lord Burnham, Dick Rusper, and Mrs. Campion-Blake — are fully characterised as living human beings, the minor figures — such as Palsam, Jawle, Figg, and the Reverend Algernon Portal — are extravagantly caricatured. This fact, however, is not necessarily to be regarded as a fault; for it represents merely an adherence to traditions of English comedy that may be traced all the way back to Ben Jonson. In his minor figures, Jonson contented himself with caricaturing certain obvious individual traits, or " humours ", and he rarely created fully rounded characters except in his leading parts.

"THE TEMPTER"

"The Crusaders" was followed, in 1893, by "The Bauble Shop", a comparatively unimportant play, which was, however, pleasing to the public; and it was to this piece that Mr. Jones referred when he said: "After obtaining another popular success, I wrote 'The Tempter', which, in print before production, received the most lavish praise from so fine a literary critic as the late H. D. Traill. Again I met with failure, and a cold reception from the press, losing much money for the manager; and again I had to go out and collect my general public around me."

"The Tempter" (1893) has been included in the present Library Edition because it reveals the range and variety of Mr. Jones's work and indicates his courage for experiment. It stands apart from all his other plays; for it is the only one which does not deal with contemporary life and the only one which is written in blank verse. It now seems rather odd that this dateless composition should have been produced in the very year in which Pinero, with "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray", initiated the modern English drama. Both plays were tragedies; but, though Pinero took his cue from Ibsen, the latest of the dramatists of continental Europe to be recognised in England, Mr. Jones — who has always been utterly English, rather than European, in his outlook — reverted to the mood and atmosphere of traditional English tragedy.

I can see no reason for the failure of "The Tempter" except that it was not timely in a year

when the public was keenly expectant of a new departure in the drama. It is unquestionably a good play. Instead of representing the work of an accredited poet who is vainly attempting to become a dramatist, it reverses the usual process and represents the work of an accredited dramatist who is trying, not so vainly, to become a poet. It is, emphatically, not an imitation of the Elizabethan drama; and consequently it is not, like most of the dramatic efforts of the nineteenth-century English poets, a mere anachronism. Instead of being constructed loosely, in an uncounted sequence of scenes that would be practicable only on the inner and outer stage of the Elizabethan theatre, it is compactly built in four acts containing a total of only five scenes, and is planned, like any other play of modern authorship, to be set forth within a picture-frame proscenium.

Although the Devil is the central figure in the play, and though this figure afforded a star part for Beerbohm Tree, it is a point of considerable critical importance that this supernatural protagonist might be deleted from the plot entirely without invalidating the action. In other words, if the same characters were placed in the same situations, they would, of their own free will, work out their same destinies to the same tragic termination. The Devil merely serves to give concrete embodiment and utterance to incentives that are subconsciously inherent in the characters themselves. Thus a story of the fourteenth century has been set forth from the point of view, not of mediæval mysticism, but of modern logic.

In view of the fact that this composition stands

unique among his writings, the command of blank verse which Henry Arthur Jones reveals may be regarded as surprising. It is excellent verse for the purposes of the theatre, less rhetorical and artificial than might have been expected; and, though it lacks the eloquence of Stephen Phillips at his best, it takes fire every now and then and kindles to a passage of authentic poetry. Though I have known Mr. Jones for many years and am thoroughly acquainted with his indomitable energy, I have never been able to discover how or when he managed to find time, while contributing an average of two new plays to the current theatre every year for more than thirty years, to teach himself to write such admirable prose as he reveals in his essays and such adequate blank verse as he has disclosed in "The Tempter." Possibly the mystery may be solved by the fact that he was gifted with an ear. The same auditory faculty which makes his informal dialogue so easy for his actors to learn and to speak comes naturally to his assistance in the writing of formal prose and verse.

"THE MASQUERADERS"

"The Masqueraders" was first produced on April 28, 1894, with the leading rôles entrusted to George Alexander and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who, a year before, had appeared together in Pinero's "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." Of "The Masqueraders", William Archer has said: "'The Crusaders' was a satirical, this is a sentimental, romance. A kindly satire upon social idealisms was the main theme of the earlier play;

in the later one, the main theme is an ecstatic love-story, upon which certain patches of satire on social corruption are incidentally embroidered."

Although this comedy showed clearly an advance over the antecedent plays of Henry Arthur Jones, it did not initiate a new style — a function which was fulfilled a few months later by "The Case of Rebellious Susan." Instead, it combined two previous styles — surrounding the same sort of impassioned love-story which had been set forth in "Judah" and in "The Dancing Girl" with the same sort of satire of a social group which had been set forth in "The Crusaders." Once again we find at the centre of the composition the love-relation between a worldly woman and an unworldly man. But David Remon, the idealist of this new drama, is not a preacher like Judah Llewellyn or a reformer like Philos Ingarfield; he is an astronomer, whose scientific searchings have made him otherworldly. And Dulcie Larondie, although we first meet her as a bar-maid, is neither an impostor like Vashti Dethic nor a pagan like Drusilla Ives; her only sin is a misguided ambition for wealth and social power. We have here, as protagonists, two pure-minded people seeking lofty regions in which their souls may dwell at peace; and their love-story is more lyrical than those of Mr. Jones's earlier dramas. It is also more dramatic. David and Dulcie are separated in an intensely theatrical scene — the scene in which the wealthy nobleman, Sir Brice Skene, outbids the hero at the auction of the heroine's kiss, and is thereby manœuvred into asking her to marry him; and they are reunited in a still more intensely theatrical scene — the thrill-

ing scene in which David Remon stakes his entire fortune against Sir Brice Skene's wife and child upon the cut of two cards out of three. These two situations have been adversely criticised because of their extreme theatricism; but both of them are undeniably effective; and, provided that, as in these episodes, a sufficient plausibility is maintained by the author, I have never been able to see a logical reason why the drama should not be dramatic or why the theatre should not be theatrical. It is in the last act that, to my mind, the treatment of the love-story is unsatisfactory. David has honestly won Dulcie — not only actually won her, by the cut of the cards, but really won her, by his faithful and unselfish devotion; yet the author insists on parting them, in order that the social conventions may be maintained. Although a satirist of society, he was not yet ready to override the rule of Mrs. Grundy. "The Masqueraders" is dated by this surrender at the final curtain-fall; for a dramatist of the present day would not hesitate to unite Dulcie and David, and to justify their union, on purely moral grounds, against the immoral strictures of the world.

Oddly enough, a pure-minded love-story which ends in a weak compromise with social custom is environed with a satire of a social group in which the insincerities of society are vigourously excoriated. We are introduced in the first act to the hunting set of Crandover, and in the second act we associate with a large company which has been gathered from the same social set in Lady Skene's drawing-room. In these two acts, Mr. Jones has painted a large canvas of social comedy; and from

this large canvas the play derives its title. In the third and fourth acts, the canvas is progressively narrowed down, from a picture of a social group to a few careful portrait-studies of the leading characters.

Thus "The Masqueraders" may be regarded from either of two points of view. As a sentimental romance, it is strongly dramatic and almost poetically appealing; and as a social comedy, it amusingly presents a group of thoroughly well-studied minor characters. These minor figures are not caricatured, like the minor rôles in "The Crusaders", but are fully characterised and rounded to the life. Particularly admirable, as representatives of the society in which they have their being, are such characters as the calculating and cold-hearted Monty and Clarice. Yet, precisely because "The Masqueraders" does two things instead of one, precisely because it sets forth a social comedy as the environment of a sentimental romance, it ranks lower as a work of art than Mr. Jones's more consistent comedies, such as "The Case of Rebellious Susan" and "The Liars", or than his more consistent serious dramas, such as "Michael and His Lost Angel" and "Mrs. Dane's Defence."

"THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN"

Since "The Case of Rebellious Susan", produced in 1894 at the Criterion Theatre with Charles Wyndham and Mary Moore in the leading rôles, was the first of that long line of thoroughly characteristic comedies on which the fame of Henry

Arthur Jones is mainly founded, the piece requires particular examination.

High comedy may be defined as that type of humourous drama in which the action results entirely from the clash of character on character. The characters must dominate the plot and must be amusing in and for themselves, so that the author need not seek recourse to extravagance of situation. The mood, throughout, should be consistently humourous; and the action should neither relax to farce nor stiffen into serious drama. The underlying purpose of the comic dramatist must be thoroughly sincere. He must aim, first and last and all the time, at veracity of characterisation. His characters should be amusing more because of what they are than because of what they do or because of what they say. The author of high comedy must be endowed, not only with humour but with good-humour as well; his mood should be not brittle and brilliant, not sarcastic or sardonic, not belligerent or even satirical, not biting and bitter, but fundamentally and generously humane. By portraying character with fidelity to nature, he must necessarily give a faithful picture of the manners of his period; and, for this reason, there is no distinction between what is sometimes called the comedy of character and what is sometimes called the comedy of manners.

High comedy is the rarest of all the various types of drama; and this fact is not surprising, since it is one of the most difficult. It has flourished only in those periods when civilisation has been taken seriously and social manners have been regarded as an art. It requires very fine

acting and an alert, intelligent, sophisticated audience. There was something in the *fin-de-siècle* spirit of the eighteen-nineties that seemed to lend itself to comedy — a something that has been destroyed in recent years by the Great War, with its sudden outbreak of barbarism and its long trail of resultant bitterness. And Mr. Jones, in the extensive series of successful comedies which began with "The Case of Rebellious Susan", was very fortunate both in his actors and in his audience. For a quarter of a century, the Criterion Theatre was the most aristocratic playhouse in London. It was patronised by ladies and gentlemen; and Mr. Jones enjoyed the great advantage of holding up a mirror before the very people who were seated in the stalls, and showing them how they appeared to a representative English mind that was not natively aristocratic in its outlook. Furthermore, he received from Sir Charles Wyndham the co-operation of an actor who was every inch a gentleman.

Wyndham was not only a very fine actor, but also a very charming person — so charming that it was even possible to listen to him without resentment while he dispensed most excellent advice. It was, doubtless, for this reason that Mr. Jones, who otherwise had been so little influenced by the French drama, allowed himself to take over from Alexandre Dumas *fils* the convenient figure of the *raisonneur*. With the younger Dumas, the *raisonneur* was a stock-figure inserted in a play for the purpose of serving as the author's mouthpiece and affording a congenial link between the author and the audience. There is a *raisonneur* in nearly

every important play of Sir Arthur Pinero's, — for example, Cayley Drummle in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray", Hilary Jesson in "His House in Order", and Peter Mottram in "Mid-Channel", — and these inspired commentators are by no means the least interesting of his characters. In the comedies of Mr. Jones, the *raisonneur* that was played by Wyndham — though he appeared under different names, as Sir Richard Kato in "The Case of Rebellious Susan" and as Sir Christopher Deering in "The Liars", for example — was almost invariably a charming old bachelor, a middle-aged, kindly man of the world, an experienced observer competent to set matters straight and to administer excellent advice to the other characters of the play, and through them to the audience.

By listening attentively to the advice of Sir Richard Kato, it is possible to gain a clue to the attitude of Mr. Jones himself toward the minor social problems of the eighteen-nineties. It will be noted that, though the heroine, Lady Susan, rebels against the constraints of social custom, the stern but kindly *raisonneur* remains a strenuous apostle of conformity. Mr. Jones himself is not a revolutionist but a conservative. Even when social conditions are admittedly unfair to the individual, he does not countenance an insurrection, but advocates that milder and more patient reformation by which freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent. The prevailing theme of the modern social drama has been a struggle between the individual and society at large; and, in discussing this theme, the majority

of modern dramatists — like Ibsen, for example — have ranged themselves on the side of the insurgent individual. But Mr. Jones, in his social comedies, while admitting that the individual is often right and society is often wrong, advises a compromise with custom for the sake of the general convenience. His message seems to be that social regulations exist for the greatest comfort of the greatest number, and that, on the whole, it is easier and wiser to conform to them than to attempt to shatter them to bits and to remould them nearer to the heart's desire. His social philosophy may not be profound, but it is stable; it may not be wise, but at least it is worldly-wise.

When "The Case of Rebellious Susan" was first published, it was dedicated by the author to Mrs. Grundy, in an ironical epistle in which that "august and austere effigy of our national taste and respectability" was addressed as "Dear and Honoured Madam"; but it is evident that, in the composition of the comedy, Mr. Jones was very careful to avoid, not only a collision with the censorship, but also any passages that might shock the respectability and taste of the dear and honoured madam who was sitting in the stalls. He has treated with deftness and delicacy the theme of conjugal infidelity, a theme which the average French dramatist would have handled more seriously and therefore more dangerously. To be sure, in the dedicatory epistle to Mrs. Grundy, the author states: "If you must have a moral in my comedy, suppose it to be this — 'That as women cannot retaliate openly, they may retaliate secretly — and *lie!*' And truly shocking moral it is, now

that we have got it." But, in comedy itself, it will be noted that Mr. Jones has been very careful not to tell us exactly how far Lady Susan proceeded toward retaliation on that evening in Egypt when "the sermon was a very long one." Though the evidence is against her, she never confesses that she has been guilty; and, at the end of the play, while appearances are conventionally conserved in a patched-up compromise, a question mark is left hanging in the air.

Attention should be called to the technical excellence of the construction of this play, — especially to the ease and grace of the exposition in the first act. Though the sharply satirised pair of minor characters, Ferguson Pybus and Elaine Shrimpton, are just as artificial as the clever caricatures of Oscar Wilde, the leading characters are all richly human and thoroughly alive. The dialogue is admirably written; but since the pre-eminence of Mr. Jones as a writer of comic dialogue is a matter that demands detailed consideration, this subject will be discussed more fully later on, in the introduction to "The Liars."

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

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THE CRUSADERS

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY OF MODERN LONDON LIFE

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Young Don Quixote comes from Peckham. The Scene is Mrs. Greenslade's Drawing-room in Mayfair. (*Fifteen months pass.*)

Act II. Utopia arises within an easy drive from Hyde Park Corner. The scene is the Rose Farm and Rose Cottages near Wimbledon, at full Midsummer. (*One night passes.*)

Act III. The Parsley Garland. The scene is the Morning room at the Rose Cottage, Wimbledon.

"The Crusaders" was originally produced at the Avenue Theatre, London, November 2, 1891.

Original Cast

Lord Burnham, the Foreign Secretary	Mr. Arthur Cecil
The Hon. Dick Rusper, his son	Mr. Yorke Stephens
Philos Ingarfield	Mr. Lewis Waller
Mr. Palsam, Vice-President of the London Reformation League	Mr. Weedon Grossmith
Mr. Burge Jawle, the Great Pessimist Philosopher	Mr. Henry Kemble
(By the kind permission of Mr. Beerbohm Tree.)	
Mr. Figg, the founder of the Jawle Guild	Mr. Sant Matthews
Rev. Algernon Portal, Curate of Saint Botolph's, Wimbledon	Mr. Allan Aynesworth
Worrell	Mr. G. L. Leith
Cynthia Greenslade	Miss Winifred Emery
Mrs. Campion-Blake, Hon. Secretary of the London Reformation League	Lady Monckton
The Queen of the Marshal Niels	Miss Lillie Belmore
The Lady Gloire de Dijon	Miss Ettie Williams
Victorine	Miss Térèse Mayer
Una Dell	Miss Olga Brandon

THE CRUSADERS

ACT I

SCENE. *Mrs. Greenslade's drawing-room in Mayfair, a very richly and tastefully furnished apartment. At back a handsome row of pillars, which flank staircases running at right angles to spectator, and leading to upper apartments. A large bowl of beautiful roses on a small table down the stage.*

A door and a fireplace on the left side of the stage.

A door on the right side of the stage, near the footlights.

Handsome settees, sofas, cabinets, etc.; the whole apartment giving evidence of great wealth and taste.

After curtain has risen a few moments, Cynthia's face, in widow's head-dress, is seen at back, peeping through the curtains on left side. She listens intently for a few moments, then withdraws; the curtains close, and a moment later she appears at bottom of stairs, still listening. She is in widow's mourning; about twenty-five years of age, with fascinating, coquettish manners. After listening a moment towards door, right, very intently, she smiles, then runs quickly to sofa, curls herself upon it, listens again, and, as Worrell enters, feigns to be asleep.

Enter Worrell, a very respectable man-servant, bald, stout, about forty-five, and announces Mr. Rusper.

Enter the Honourable Dick Rusper, about thirty; an easy, affable, good-looking English gentleman.

Exit Worrell, right.

Dick comes down, sees Cynthia, stops suddenly, contemplates her with great admiration.

DICK. Fast asleep! How interesting! How innocent! (*Pause, full of admiration.*) Devilish pretty woman!

[*Steals noiselessly across to back of sofa, bends over her.*

[*Cynthia opens her eyes, affects not to see him, yawns, stretches her arms, then suddenly looks at him, pretends to start, sits quickly bolt upright on sofa, stares at him as if just wakened from sleep.*

CYNTHIA. How stupid of me! (*Jumps up quickly, goes to him, extends her hand cordially, eagerly.*) Well, will Lord Burnham be president?

DICK. Yes, I've rushed him into it.

CYNTHIA. How good of you! Then London is reformed already!

[*Claps her hands with delight, crossing to the bowl of roses, buries her head in them.*

DICK. It ought to be, with my dad to boss the — what d' ye call the concern?

CYNTHIA. The London Reformation League. (*Smells the roses delicately and luxuriously.*) Aren't these roses exquisite?

[*Gathers a rose, plays with it.*

DICK (*comes up to table, speaks in a low, soft, winning voice*). I wish you'd let me be on your committee.

CYNTHIA (*shakes her head*). Mr. Palsam objects.

DICK. Why?

CYNTHIA. Because you're married.

DICK. So are most of the other members.

CYNTHIA. Yes, but they — (*longish pause; drops her voice*) they *continue* married.

DICK. So do I — at a distance. My wife and I found out that when we were together we were miserable, and when we were away from each other we were happy; so we parted. She does as she likes; I do as I like. A jolly sensible arrangement!

CYNTHIA. Yes, but — you can't reform London that way.

DICK (*approaching her*). I don't want to reform London at all.

CYNTHIA (*getting away from him*). Ah! I knew you were n't in earnest! Nobody is in earnest except Mr. Ingarfield.

DICK. No; and nobody wants to be, when they 've once seen him.

CYNTHIA (*reproachfully*). You don't believe in our great scheme!

DICK (*comes up to her; in a very insinuating whisper*). Yes I do, if it brings me near you!

CYNTHIA (*coldly, severely*). Please don't trifle. I have a terrible responsibility resting on me!

DICK (*looks at her, laughs*). Since when?

CYNTHIA. Ever since I met Mr. Ingarfield. My whole character has completely changed.

DICK (*shakes his head*). Characters don't change. You 're the same wicked torment of a flirt that you were six years ago, when you plagued the life out of Fred Rossiter and me, and threw us both over to marry Mr. Greenslade. You 've taken up this London Reformation scheme just as you took up the cottagers' poultry scheme, and by-and-bye you 'll find this Ingarfield as great a bore as that old Cochin China, and you 'll wring his neck and stop his crowing for ever!

CYNTHIA (*indignantly*). How can you speak so? How little you know me!

DICK. How little you know yourself!

CYNTHIA. The last four months life has become charged with terrible meaning to me. My whole future is devoted to carrying out my husband's will.

DICK. It is n't his will. It was never signed.

CYNTHIA. It would have been if he had lived another hour. I promised him I would carry it out.

DICK. But he was n't —

CYNTHIA. What?

DICK. I should pain you.

CYNTHIA. No; it 's nearly a year. Go on.

DICK. His health — his mind —

CYNTHIA. Yes, poor man! But he was quite harmless, only very eccentric. And he was a great public benefactor.

DICK. He made a splendid fortune out of his non-intoxicant beverages.

CYNTHIA. But it was the building-land that made his fortune.

(*Rises indignantly.*) I hate you!

DICK. Why?

CYNTHIA. You don't believe in anything!

DICK. I don't believe in temperance champagne. But I'll believe in reforming London if (*approaching her tenderly*) you'll let me be on the committee.

CYNTHIA. Ask Mr. Palsam. If he objects, you could still—

DICK. What?

CYNTHIA (*retreats from him up stage*). Help Mr. Ingarfield.

[*She throws the rose coquettishly down stage. He looks at her a moment, then goes and picks it up, kisses it, puts it in his buttonhole.*

[*Worrell enters right; announces Mrs. Campion-Blake. Enter, door right, Mrs. Campion-Blake, a fussy energetic, talkative society woman, rather showily dressed. She comes down stage centre. Exit Worrell.*

[*Cynthia advances to shake hands with Mrs. Campion-Blake.*

[*Dick regards his rose affectionately.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*shaking hands*). My dear, congratulate me. I've got Lord Rodbaston to join the committee.

CYNTHIA. Lord Rodbaston?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The great brewers, Hooper, Barkin & Co. Rodbaston promises to take a very active part in the League; only, of course, we shall have to put the temperance question a little in the background.

CYNTHIA (*dubiously*). But our programme! (*Quoting.*) "London sober! London clean! London honest!"

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. We'll make London clean and honest first —

CYNTHIA. But Mr. Ingarfield —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. My dear child, we shall never reform London if we begin by offending everybody. Ah! How d'ye do, Mr. Rusper? (*Comes to Dick, shakes hands.*) Now tell me, Lord Burnham must positively be president!

DICK. Yes; he's coming here this afternoon to meet Mr. Ingarfield.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*shows great satisfaction*). There's a dear fellow. It's a million pities we can't get the Marquis of Bicester!

CYNTHIA. Can't we?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. My dear, can you ask, after Mr. Ingarfield's attacks upon the great ground landlords of London? Mr. Ingarfield is so impracticable! So injudicious!

[*Enter Worrell, right door. He announces Mr. Palsam, and exit.*

[*Enter, right, Mr. Palsam, a thin, pale, weedy, nervous, unhealthy-looking little man, about thirty-five to forty, very short-sighted, precise, fidgetty, excitable, waspish, narrow, sincere, with a constant habit of nervously washing his hands, and a painfully earnest manner. Dick nods coolly to Palsam as he passes. Mrs. Campion-Blake bows slightly. Palsam comes to Cynthia, shakes hands.*

PALSAM (*he always speaks in the same painfully earnest manner*). I must speak to you! It's most important! (*Cynthia and Palsam move down stage. Mrs. Campion-Blake goes to Dick and talks with him.*) Your new French maid.

CYNTHIA. Victorine?

PALSAM. Where was she last Sunday afternoon?

CYNTHIA. She went out.

PALSAM. Where?

CYNTHIA. I didn't ask. It's no business of mine.

PALSAM (*pained beyond measure*). Oh! my dear Mrs. Greenslade, no business of yours? I saw her in the Green Park, walking with a soldier — at least, I'm almost sure it was she — I'm very short-sighted — his arm was round her waist. (*Reprovingly.*) No business of yours!

CYNTHIA. But you're not sure.

PALSAM. Promise me you'll question her.

CYNTHIA. She wouldn't tell me.

PALSAM. Yes she would, if you approached her in the right way. There's a *way* of getting at the truth in these cases. Besides, wouldn't it be much better to err on the right side, and accuse her wrongfully, rather than let her escape if she's guilty?

CYNTHIA. Guilty of what?

PALSAM. Well, she's French. I'm sorry to say it, but such a thing as real, genuine morality, as we know it in England, doesn't exist in the whole of the French nation. Besides, we can't be too particular —

CYNTHIA. Really, Mr. Palsam —

[*Going away from him.*

PALSAM. Well, I thought it my duty to caution you. (*Following her up.*) *I implore* you not to let the matter rest. I felt *so grieved* when I heard you had taken a French maid; it upset me for days! I *do* think it's *so wicked* of people! —

[*He goes muttering up to chair, seats himself, genuinely distressed.*

DICK (*to Mrs. Campion-Blake*). Jolly lot of nice people on your committee.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*rattling on to Dick*). Yes, it's quite a democratic movement amongst the aristocracy. The Duchess of Launceston said to me the other day — such a charming woman, the duchess — the duchess

said, "Mrs. Campion-Blake, this London Reformation League is bound to succeed. You're all so terribly in earnest." And with Lord Burnham as president —

PALSAM (*jumps up, startled*). The Bishop of Huntingdon is to be president —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. My dear Mr. Palsam, you're dreaming. The Bishop of Huntingdon has no social influence whatever. Besides, he's Low Church, and really one might as well be dead and buried at once! No; Lord Burnham has consented.

PALSAM (*vigorously*). I really must protest against the way in which everything is being taken out of my hands. As Mr. Greenslade's acting trustee I am empowered —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Pardon me! Mr. Greenslade's first will remains in force — everything is legally Mrs. Greenslade's.

PALSAM. That makes no difference. I —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. But listen a moment —

PALSAM. I cannot! I will not argue! It always excites me so! and I'm not strong. *I* have decided that the Bishop of Huntingdon shall be the president.

[*Seats himself resolutely.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. And *we* have decided that Lord Burnham shall be president. (*Seating herself resolutely.*) Have n't we, dear?

CYNTHIA (*holding a rose over her head, playing with it above her nose.*) I wish we could reform London without quarrelling like cats and dogs every time we meet.

[*Goes slowly to table, burying her face in the roses.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*resignedly.*) Of course the decision rests entirely with you.

[*Enter Worrell, who announces Lord Burnham. Enter Lord Burnham, a very distinguished-looking man about sixty; affable, shrewd, well-bred, a genial cynic.*

[*Exit Worrell.*

[*Lord Burnham comes down to Cynthia, bows to Mrs. Campion-Blake.*

CYNTHIA. How d'ye do? (*Shaking hands.*) It's so kind of you to be our president. (*Palsam listens attentively, Mrs. Campion-Blake also.*) Now we shall begin work in real earnest!

[*Palsam shows angry despair, turns half round in his chair with a despairing gesture, crosses his legs, bites his thumb. Mrs. Campion-Blake shows triumph.*

CYNTHIA (*noticing Palsam*). Mr. Palsam (*very engagingly*), I'm sure you'll consider it an honour to aid Lord Burnham in our great work. (*Palsam comes forward. Cynthia introduces.*) Mr. Palsam, our vice-president! Lord Burnham, our *president!*

[*Emphatically. The two men bow.*

PALSAM. Of course, if Lord Burnham has considered the solemn responsibility — !

LORD BURNHAM. Well, on second thoughts, I'm afraid I'm scarcely fitted for the post —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*quickly*). You are positively the only man in London who is fitted!

PALSAM. You'll pardon me, but —

CYNTHIA (*sweetly*). Mr. Palsam, it is quite settled. Will you be seated?

[*Points to sofa.*

PALSAM (*goes to sofa, muttering*). It is so wrong of people! But he'll do something, and then (*joyfully*) I'll make an example of him!

LORD BURNHAM (*looking at Palsam, aside*). Rather a mangy vice-president! (*Aloud.*) Yes, on consideration, I'm a busy man, and —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Oh, but the president's position is quite honorary. There is nothing to do.

LORD BURNHAM. I shall not be expected to undertake the reformation of any individual Londoner?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Oh, not at all!

LORD BURNHAM. Not even myself?

PALSAM (*solemnly*). The committee of the London Reformation League do not stand in need of any reformation themselves, except in trifles.

CYNTHIA. We all approach perfection as nearly as is endurable for our neighbours, except in trifles!

DICK (*strikes in cheerfully*). I know I've been getting better ever since I've been coming here; and now I feel good enough for anything — good enough to be on the committee!

LORD BURNHAM. I've no doubt the moral atmosphere is bracing, and (*glancing at Cynthia and Mrs. Campion-Blake*) enchanting. And if I consulted only my own narrow, selfish wish to improve my own character, I'm sure I could n't do it under better auspices. But I've always considered it a peculiarly base kind of treachery to be any better than my neighbours. It 's leaving them in the lurch, and I can't do it. Now I'm fond of racing —

[*Palsam shows great pain and disgust.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Why not? A fine, manly, English sport! There 's nothing in horse-racing incompatible with the London Reformation League. Besides, if you lend us the support of your name to improve society in *some* ways, that surely gives you a little license to — a — exercise your discretion in — a — *some other* ways.

LORD BURNHAM. It is n't my *discretion* I want to exercise, it 's my *indiscretion* that I want to have an occasional gallop.

CYNTHIA (*imploringly*). Oh, but you could help us so much! Your name alone would be so valuable!

LORD BURNHAM. Well, if my name will improve society —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Oh, it will! it will! An old title carries so much weight! (*Very coaxingly.*) You *will* be our first president?

LORD BURNHAM. Well, till you can get somebody better. (*Rises.*) Now tell me, what are we doing? How far have we reformed London at present? Have we made a start?

CYNTHIA. Oh yes! We have taken five hundred poor seamstresses out of the worst sweating shops in the East End, and set them to grow roses on a rose-farm near Wimbledon Common. Look (*pointing to the bowl of roses*). This is the result.

LORD BURNHAM (*smells roses.*) Delicious!

CYNTHIA (*enthusiastically*). One can't have too many roses! And it's such a lovely industry!

LORD BURNHAM. Did they grow these?

CYNTHIA. Yes; under gardeners, of course. We have forty experienced gardeners to teach them.

LORD BURNHAM. Does the rose-farm pay?

CYNTHIA. Not at present. But it does n't matter, because we've so much money coming in, we don't know what to do with it.

LORD BURNHAM. May I ask what is the precise sum we have available for the reformation of London?

CYNTHIA. Mr. Greenslade left over a million and a half. Except his ample provision for me, it all goes to carry out Mr. Ingarfield's scheme.

LORD BURNHAM. How is it invested?

PALSAM. In modern residences in Peckham and Camberwell.

LORD BURNHAM. Of course! Mr. Greenslade had large building speculations in the south of London.

PALSAM. Yes; he built quite a superior style of residence for forty pounds a year; you might almost call it a suburban mansion.

LORD BURNHAM. In fact, we may be said to owe modern Peckham and Camberwell to Mr. Greenslade, eh?

PALSAM. And parts of Clapham and Wimbledon.

LORD BURNHAM. What else did he do?

PALSAM. He discovered several temperance tonics. I

have derived great benefit from his beverages.

LORD BURNHAM. He seems to have done a great deal of reformation altogether.

PALSAM. Yes. My lord, I never allow a drop of alcohol inside my house, and, if I may suggest, it would set a very beneficial example if you, as president of the League, would also make a strict rule—

LORD BURNHAM (*aghast*). Yes! Yes! I've rather a good cellar just at present, Mr. Palsam, but—I'll think it over. (*Hastily.*) Now about this rose-farm; very delightful place, eh, Dick?

DICK. Jolliest place in the world. You'd think you were a hundred miles in the country. And the rose-farmers in their pretty dresses, and singing their songs! A most charming idea, Mrs. Greenslade!

[*Leans over Cynthia's chair.*

LORD BURNHAM. The rose-farm was your idea, Mrs. Greenslade?

CYNTHIA. Mr. Ingarfield's and mine. Mr. Greenslade bought the forty acres for building, but there were two such pretty old-fashioned cottages—

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*gushingly*). Perfect dreams of cottages!

CYNTHIA. So I persuaded him to give it to me. I keep the cottages furnished, and we have built some new houses for the rose-farmers.

LORD BURNHAM. And these young persons, young girls, young women, or whatever they are—

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Most of them have titles.

LORD BURNHAM (*surprised*). Titles!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Yes. That was my idea. A title is such a powerful incentive to good conduct. So we give them titles for rewards. One is called "The Queen of the Marshal Niels," another "The Lady Gloire de Dijon," and so on.

LORD BURNHAM. Do these titles imply a moral or a horticultural distinction?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Both moral and horticultural.

PALSAM. During the winter I have arranged for nightly lectures of an improving nature.

LORD BURNHAM. Ah! that sounds cheerful!

[*Enter Worrell, comes down stage a little.*

WORRELL. The workingmen members have arrived, ma'am.

CYNTHIA. Show them upstairs —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The other way —

CYNTHIA. And have some lunch prepared for Mr. Ingarfield in the next room.

[*Worrell goes back to door, right.*

LORD BURNHAM. We have workingmen on our committee?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Only three. It pleases the workingmen, and (*benevolently*) it does n't do any harm.

WORRELL (*looking off*). Mr. Ingarfield and Miss Dell have just come in, ma'am.

CYNTHIA (*shows some slight agitation at the mention of Ingarfield's name*). Show them in here. No (*rises*), I 'll speak to them first in the library.

[*Palsam watches Cynthia very suspiciously.*

[*Exit Worrell. Cynthia follows him.*

PALSAM (*has been watching her sourly and suspiciously; aside.*) She 's gone to settle something important behind my back. (*Going up to door, right; aside.*) They're always settling things without consulting me!

[*Goes off, muttering.*

[*Lord Burnham, Dick, and Mrs. Campion-Blake have watched him off. Lord Burnham looks grave.*

DICK. You 're in for a good thing, sir!

LORD BURNHAM (*rises*). I shall never live up to it, Dick.

[*Comes down stage a few steps till he is on a level with Dick. The two men look at each other. Dick laughs at his father. Lord Burnham walks gravely and moodily down to sofa, looks anxious and solemn.*

DICK. I say, Mrs. Blake, I 've just taken a little place

near the rose-farm at Wimbledon, and I can come over occasionally.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. That will be sweet of you.

LORD BURNHAM (*has been listening*). Dick!

DICK (*comes down to Lord Burnham*). Sir!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*rises, takes out her watch*). It's nearly time for the committee.

[*Goes up to foot of staircase, looks up at it attentively, listening.*

LORD BURNHAM (*confidentially, in a tone of kind reproof*). No damned nonsense with this Mrs. Greenslade!

DICK. Damned nonsense, sir?

LORD BURNHAM. Yes. This house you've taken at Wimbledon! I'm not straitlaced, but one must think a little about public opinion. It doesn't do to get found out—it's so awkward all round.

DICK. I assure you, sir, there is n't the least foundation.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*coming down stage*). As usual! Our workingmen members are quarrelling amongst themselves.

LORD BURNHAM. Apparently we are a hybrid committee. What's this Ingarfield like?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Oh, he's a new variety of inspired idiot. Something between an angel, a fool, and a poet. And atrociously in earnest! A sort of Shelley from Peckham Rye. Poor old Greenslade was as mad as a hatter, and Mr. Palsam worried him into a death-bed repentance, and got him to leave all his money to this scheme of Ingarfield's.

LORD BURNHAM. And that's how we come to be reforming London at this prodigious rate.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Yes. Well, if we don't do any good, we shan't do any harm. Oh, I want you to dine with us one evening, and I'll ask Mr. Ingarfield. He's rather good fun, if you take him in small doses.

LORD BURNHAM. Thank you, I—a—I—

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. You're going to say "No," but

you shall choose your own evening. And you shan't be bored. I'll ask Madame Fanny Blower, the American gymnast. Have you seen her performance?

LORD BURNHAM. No — I —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Oh, she's *adorable!* She gives drawing-room gymnastics after dinner. It isn't the least indelicate — after the first shock. It's a splendid lesson in digestion to all diners-out.

DICK. I've seen her. Very fine woman, and not at all overdressed.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. You'll come too, Mr. Rusper?

DICK. Delighted. I say, who's this Miss Una Dell?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. She's the granddaughter of the mad Chartist poet. She's a good deal madder than poor dear Ingarfield —

[*Door, right, opens.*

DICK (*warningly*). Hush!

[*Enter Cynthia and Philos Ingarfield; he is about thirty; long light curly hair parted in the middle, worn eager face, high narrow forehead; lean, nervous, dreamy, absorbed. They come down stage towards table, Cynthia a step or two in advance of Ingarfield.*

[*Una Dell, a sensitive, shy, enthusiastic girl, about twenty, comes to door, right, enters a step or two and stands there.*

CYNTHIA (*to Ingarfield, with great concern*). You're tired! You're hungry!

PHILOS (*looking at her with great tenderness*). No! My work is food and rest for me! My work (*aside, very softly*), and my love for you!

DICK (*aside, jealously*). That long-haired chap's bowling me out!

CYNTHIA. Lord Burnham, may I present Mr. Philos Ingarfield?

(*Ingarfield and Lord Burnham bow. Mrs. Campion-Blake engages Philos, talks to him.*)

And — (*looking round for Una, who stands against*

door) — where 's — Oh, there you are! Come here! (*Una comes down. Worrell enters right, comes down to Cynthia. Continuing, as Una comes down.*) Lord Burnham, this is Miss Una Dell. On a platform she can talk to three thousand miners. In a drawing-room she has n't a word to say.

LORD BURNHAM (*bows to Una, motions her to a seat on sofa*). I hope we shall find some subject.

CYNTHIA (*laughing*). Try social science.

[*Goes a step or two back, where she is joined by Worrell, who whispers to her.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*to Philos*). Sit down! You are really killing yourself. (*Gets Philos into chair.*) Now you must be very nice to Lord Burnham! He can be of the greatest use to your scheme.

PHILOS (*very earnestly*). Does he love his fellow-men?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*dubiously*). Well, not particularly — but he has immense social influence. I 'm afraid he 's rather worldly (*shaking her head sadly*), not serious, not earnest, not one of us. Still, we must put up with his frivolity for the good of London.

CYNTHIA (*to Worrell*). Yes; in that room.

[*Indicates door, left. Exit Worrell.*

[*Cynthia joins Philos and Mrs. Campion-Blake.*

DICK (*has been watching Mrs. Campion-Blake fussing about Philos — aside*). What women can see in that fellow! I wish I could ship him off to Costa Rica along with his ne 'er-do-wells.

[*Watches Cynthia and Mrs. Campion-Blake.*

UNA (*has been talking enthusiastically to Lord Burnham; suddenly*). Oh, but I love blackguards! I love gaol-birds! I love outcasts of all sorts! I love everybody that 's unfortunate, and miserable, and ugly, and wicked, and stupid! Don't you love them?

LORD BURNHAM. At some distance.

UNA. Oh, but you 'll have to love them if you want to reform them. You 'll never do it without *love.*

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LORD BURNHAM (*looks disconcerted — aside*). I shall resign the first chance I get.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*effusively to Philos*). Yes; you must! Lord Burnham is positively *dying* to dine with you!

PHILOS. My dinner would n't suit Lord Burnham.

LORD BURNHAM. Why not?

PHILOS. It 's so plain.

CYNTHIA. Why do you live like a hermit?

PHILOS. I can't feast while my brothers and sisters are starving.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Your brothers and sisters? Where are they?

PHILOS. In the gutters, in the alleys, in the gaols and work-houses. There are hundreds of thousands of them in the East of London that never smile.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Poor creatures! Well, now Lord Burnham is president, we shall soon put matters right for them! You 'll put Mr. Ingarfield's scheme into operation at once, Lord Burnham.

LORD BURNHAM. Certainly. Perhaps Mr. Ingarfield will give me a few details. Where do we start?

PHILOS. I start with the condition of London at the present moment. What have we made of our city? What are we going to make of it? Put up twenty-story flats all over the West End as far as Richmond, build Clapham Junctions all over the suburbs, and let the East End sprawl in its misery till it covers Essex. That 's London's present ideal. Is it yours?

LORD BURNHAM. I regret to say I have no ideals.

UNA. No ideals?

LORD BURNHAM. No; you see I 've been in Parliament since I was twenty-two.

PHILOS. I want to put an ideal London before every Londoner. I want all good citizens to stand in line and say to London filth, to London ugliness, to food adulteration, to slums, to bad drains, to legal chican-

ery, to horse-racing, to the Stock Exchange, and to all other ways of living upon your neighbour without working for him, to the thief, to the idle, to the drunkard, to the jerry house-builder — I want Londoners to say to all of them — "We'll abolish you!"

LORD BURNHAM. And what do you suppose all these good folks will say in reply?

DICK (*in a low aside*). "We'll see you damned first!"

[*Enter Worrell door, left.*

PHILOS (*continuing excitedly*). I begin —

WORRELL. Mr. Ingarfield's luncheon is served.

[*Crosses to door, right; exit.*

LORD BURNHAM. Well, where do we begin?

PHILOS. Everywhere where there is dishonesty, misery, disease, despair! I want to make every Londoner feel that every broken waif of humanity in this city, no matter how evil, wretched, ignorant, sunken, diseased, is his brother, his sister, his child!

LORD BURNHAM. I fancy we've heard something like this before.

UNA. Yes; it's two thousand years old, or thereabouts. Mr. Ingarfield only preaches what everybody believes, and nobody practises.

PHILOS (*absorbed, continuing*). I want to bind all Londoners in one task, not to cease or rest till they have made London beautiful, London happy, London honest, London healthy, London sober, London clean, London free, from north to south, from west to east, in every street, in every home!

LORD BURNHAM. I don't quite catch the method!

UNA. Don't you? It's so easy! By persuasion! There's no other way of making people better. Men don't keep on being foolish for ever. They used to cut one another's throats. They're beginning to see that's absurd. By-and-bye they'll see it's just as absurd to cheat and lie to one another!

LORD BURNHAM (*shakes his head*). My dear young lady, believe me, lying is far too venerable and *useful* an accomplishment for humanity to see its absurd aspect — in our day at least.

[*Worrell enters at door, right, with two telegrams; brings them to Philos. Palsam follows him, watching him closely.*

PHILOS (*taking telegrams from Worrell*). Excuse me.

[*Opens them.*

[*Worrell goes to door, right, watched by Palsam. Exit Worrell.*

PALSAM (*watching Worrell off very suspiciously*). It can't be right to bring that French maid into this house!

[*Stands moody, distressed.*

PHILOS (*having read telegram*). My poor ne'er-do-wells!

[*Dick listens very attentively.*

CYNTHIA. Where are they?

PHILOS. On board the *Avenger*, at Portsmouth. The President of Costa Rica refuses to receive them unless they are accompanied by a suitable guardian guaranteed by the English government.

DICK. Perhaps the Foreign Office can help you, Mr. Ingarfield. My father is Foreign Secretary —

[*Lord Burnham looks anxious, frowns, shakes his head at Dick.*

PHILOS. It would be kind of you. Read these telegrams.

[*Gives telegrams to Dick.*

LORD BURNHAM. Who are these ne'er-do-wells of yours, Mr. Ingarfield?

PHILOS. Those who have been beaten and trodden underfoot in the struggle for life — the weak, the diseased, the ignorant.

LORD BURNHAM. A good many bad characters.

PHILOS. You should n't call any man a bad character till you 've changed places with him.

LORD BURNHAM. What shall you do with them?

PHILOS. I don't know. They've broken loose at Portsmouth; and the authorities threaten to prosecute me, unless I remove them —

DICK (*having read telegrams, rises, and hands them back to Philos*). There's only one way, Mr. Ingarfield! You must go to Costa Rica yourself!

[*Una shows interest and slight alarm.*

PHILOS. Myself?

CYNTHIA. Impossible! Mr. Ingarfield cannot be spared from London!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Not till his scheme is in working order.

DICK. Mr. Ingarfield will either have to go to Costa Rica, or be prosecuted. This telegram from the mayor of Portsmouth uses pretty strong language. The Portsmouth people don't seem to like ne'er-do-wells. (*Dick hands telegrams to Mrs. Campion-Blake and Cynthia, who read them eagerly.*) All Mr. Ingarfield has to do is to run over to Costa Rica, establish his colony, and leave his scheme in our hands —

PALSAM (*authoritatively*). I believe I am the vice-president of this League —

DICK (*amiably, soothingly*). Quite so, Mr. Palsam — leave the scheme in Mr. Palsam's hands. We can make it all right with the Costa Rica government —

LORD BURNHAM (*warningly*). I'm not sure, Dick —

DICK. We can guarantee Mr. Ingarfield as a suitable person to look after ne'er-do-wells. It's a mere formality.

LORD BURNHAM (*rises*). May I see the telegrams?

[*Joins Cynthia and Mrs. Campion-Blake. They hand telegrams to him.*

DICK (*continues, glowingly*). And it's a lovely country! Don't I wish I had the chance of going!

PHILOS (*absorbed*). I've given my word to them. If I forsake them, what will become of them?

DICK. The Portsmouth magistrates will deal with them.

PHILOS (*scarcely listening to Dick*). And I could see for myself how far the country's suited to receive my oppressed ones.

[*Sits in armchair, absorbed, deliberating.*

DICK (*plying him*). The country's a perfect paradise for all classes of people who can't get on here. Why can't they get on here? Because, from constitutional reasons, they either don't, or can't, or won't, work. Well, in Costa Rica there's no need for much work, nothing beyond that slight amount which is a pleasurable activity. There's the coffee! All you've got to do is to let it grow, and dry it! There are the bananas! All you've got to do is to let them grow, and gather them! And the vines! (*Palsam looks ferocious.*) Talk about *Château Lafitte*—

PALSAM (*very waspishly*). I object to the Greenslade bequest being squandered in the pernicious industry of intoxication—

DICK (*comes to him good-humouredly, walks him to sofa*). Quite so, Mr. Palsam. We'll stick to the coffee and bananas. We must take care these poor ne'er-do-wells don't get rich too suddenly. (*Gets Palsam soothed, and seated on sofa.*) It might upset them. And when we see each one of them owning a flourishing coffee and banana plantation, instead of loafing about a public-house—by Jove, we shall be happy!

PHILOS (*suddenly*). I'll go with them! It's my duty, and I'll go!

DICK (*aside, joyfully*). Landed him!

[*Cynthia and Mrs. Campion-Blake, very much concerned, come to Philos.*

CYNTHIA. But you can't be spared.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Positively you shan't go.

PHILOS. I must.

CYNTHIA. Is there nothing that would keep you?

[*Philos looks at her.*

UNA (*aside, watching*). Yes. His love for her.

PHILOS. Nothing must keep me.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. What object is there in your going?

PHILOS. The welfare of seven hundred and sixty poor souls who trust to me.

CYNTHIA. Don't decide now. Let it wait. (*Giving back telegrams.*) Your lunch — it's waiting in that room. Una, lunch. (*To Philos, imploringly.*) You won't go?

PHILOS. If I don't, who will?

UNA (*suddenly*). I will! Let me take them!

DICK. You! Impossible! An emigrant ship is no place for a lady.

UNA. I'm not much of a lady. I'm a good deal of a woman. I'm safe amongst the miners of Northumberland, and amongst the thieves of the East End.

DICK. But you wouldn't be safe in the *Avenger*. It's the rottenest old tub —

UNA. And you want Mr. Ingarfield to go! (*To Philos.*) Did you hear? You won't go in that ship?

PHILOS. Yes. Don't fear.

[*Una pauses, looks at him, then exit, left. Philos is going after her.*

CYNTHIA (*stopping him*). Surely you won't risk your life. The ship is dangerous —

PHILOS (*shakes his head, smiles, with calm assurance*). No ship will sink with me while my work remains undone.

[*Exit Philos.*

DICK (*aside*). He'll go. And if I don't bowl him out before he comes back —

[*Cynthia has watched Philos off, left; stands at door watching.*

[*Worrell enters, announces Mr. Figg, Mr. Burge Jawle.*

[*Figg, a dapper, polite, insinuating, finicky, facile, plausible, bald man of forty, enters, followed by Burge Jawle, a fat, jaundiced, heavy, torpid, olive-complexioned man of fifty; he waddles slowly down stage after*

Figg. Cynthia closes door, left, comes to centre of stage, meets Figg. Exit Worrell right.

FIGG. How d' ye do? (*Shaking hands with Cynthia.*) You asked me to bring our great social philosopher, Mr. Burge Jawle.

(*Jawle waddles down slowly in an unconcerned, torpid way.*)

(*Introducing.*) Mrs. Greenslade.

CYNTHIA. How d' ye do? (*Offering hand.*)

JAWLE (*waddles up, puts his heavy fat paw in Cynthia's hand, speaks in a heavy drawl without any animation or excitement*). Thank you. I am as usual. My health is never robust. My vital processes are extremely slow. I nourish myself with great difficulty.

[*Holding Cynthia's hand — a slight pause.*

CYNTHIA (*a little embarrassed*). I 'm sorry —

JAWLE. Standing fatigues me. I think I 'll sit down.

(*Looks round. Lord Burnham rises, offers his chair. Jawle looks at it, looks all round, spies a very comfortable armchair down in corner.*)

No — that chair seems to be especially adapted to my requirements.

[*Waddles very slowly down, seats himself with great precision, leans back, places his hands on his stomach, sits placidly absorbed, utterly oblivious of what is going on.*

PALSAM (*to Figg — Cynthia listening*). You were saying that Mr. Jawle's social philosophy will assist us in reforming London.

FIGG (*confidently*). You can't reform London without it. He has devoted his whole life to it, and he is at this moment absolutely penniless. The herd do not understand Jawle. By the way (*dropping his voice*), you could not put Mr. Greenslade's bequest to a better use than by substantially rewarding Jawle's immense services to humanity.

CYNTHIA. Of course, if his philosophy helps us to re-

form London, we ought to pay him for it. Would he accept —

FIGG. I'll put it delicately to him. I think I can conquer his scruples.

(*Jawle gives vent to a peculiar melancholy chuckle, still sitting sublimely unconscious in his armchair.*)

Look!

(*Calls everybody's attention to Jawle, who continues to sit unmoved, with his fat hands on his stomach. All look at Jawle.*)

He's often like that for hours! He has that rare faculty of burying himself! He's quite unaware of our presence! We might discuss his whole system of philosophy without his knowing it.

PALSAM (*who has been anxiously waiting to question Figg*). Are you quite sure his principles have an improving tendency for young men?

FIGG (*glibly*). My dear sir, Jawle has swept away all the older philosophies entirely. Jawle's is the only rational system of ethics.

CYNTHIA (*dubiously*). What does he teach?

FIGG (*same glib tone*). Jawle's fundamental doctrine is the immorality of marriage.

[*Great surprise on the part of Mrs. Campion-Blake and Cynthia. Palsam jumps up, aghast. Dick and Lord Burnham chuckle. Jawle preserves his attitude of placid self-absorption in the armchair.*

LORD BURNHAM (*after the consternation has subsided, very quietly*). And what follows?

PALSAM (*much disturbed*). What?

FIGG (*bland, soothing*). Pray don't misunderstand me. Jawle has no objection to marriage in itself, but only as the one great means of promoting human misery. Jawle entertains equal objections to every other method of perpetuating the human race. Am I not right?

(*Crosses to Jawle, stands over his chair. Rather loudly to Jawle, prompting him.*) Marriage!

JAWLE (*faintly rouses himself, speaks very sententiously and authoritatively*). There being an immense balance of misery and suffering in every human lot, it necessarily follows that marriage, as the chief means of increasing that misery and suffering, is a criminal and anti-social action.

[*Relapses into his self-absorption, takes no notice whatever of what is going on.*

[*Dick and Lord Burnham are amused.*

CYNTHIA (*puzzled*). But — if nobody married —

FIGG (*addresses himself to Palsam*). I'm sure you agree with us, Mr. Palsam, that the rapid increase of the human herd is a matter for the gravest alarm —

PALSAM (*moodily*). I've always thought there was far too great a propensity — I can't understand it!

FIGG. Jawle calculates that at the present rate the human race will infallibly exhaust every possible means of subsistence in six generations!

PALSAM. Dear me! Dear me! What can be done?

[*Retires to fireplace, stands terribly distressed, his lips muttering occasionally.*

FIGG. Jawle's system delivers us. (*Smiling blandly all around.*) I must persuade you all to become members of the Jawle guild. (*With proud satisfaction.*) I founded the Jawle guild. I was the first to understand Jawle. Mrs. Greenslade, you'll join our guild?

CYNTHIA. Ye — es. What do you do?

FIGG. We discuss Jawle's doctrines. Sometimes Jawle himself comes. But his health is very precarious, is it not? (*Appealing to Jawle. Jawle takes no notice. Figg prompts him in a loud tone.*) Your health.

JAWLE (*arousing himself slightly as before*). Yes; my vital processes are so abnormally slow that at any moment it may become advisable to bring them to a conclusion.

[*Relapses into self-absorption.*

[*Cynthia looks inquiringly at Figg for an explanation.*

FIGG (*in a low, reverential tone*). Jawle advocates the forcible and abrupt extinction of human life in certain cases — his own included.

CYNTHIA (*alarmed*). Not suicide?

FIGG (*reverently*). We trust he won't consider it necessary till he has completed his social philosophy.

CYNTHIA. Oh!

[*Leans back in her chair, bewildered, gazing at Jawle, who preserves his attitude of impenetrable self-absorption. Dick, Lord Burnham, and Mrs. Campion-Blake have been talking together.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*gushingly to Lord Burnham*). I'm sure you can persuade the Duchess of Launceston to join us. It's so necessary that the reformation of London should be done by our own class, and not allowed to fall into the hands of agitators —

[*During Mrs. Campion-Blake's speech, Worrell has entered on stairs, right, and come down to foot of staircase.*

WORRELL (*rather alarmed*). I beg pardon, madam — the three parties upstairs —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*to Lord Burnham*). Our workingmen members —

CYNTHIA. Well?

WORRELL. They're using coarse language to each other, and one of the parties has assumed a threatening attitude toward the other two parties.

[*A great smash heard off.*

[*Worrell goes quickly upstairs and off, right, followed by Cynthia, Dick, and Figg.*

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake and Lord Burnham rise. Palsam stands undecided.*

LORD BURNHAM. I'm afraid our workingmen members have not learnt drawing-room methods of reforming London. (*Looking at watch.*) I must be going.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. No — you must attend one committee-meeting, and start us! Just one!

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LORD BURNHAM (*going off left with Mrs. Campion-Blake*). Very well — just one, but only one.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Campion-Blake and Lord Burnham.*

[*Jawle has preserved an attitude of impenetrable calm, has not moved a muscle all through; he sits with hands placidly resting on stomach, and gives vent to his melancholy chuckle. Palsam has made a movement up stage to follow the others, but hearing Jawle, hesitates, then fidgets down to Jawle, evidently anxious to question him.*

PALSAM (*fidgeting round Jawle*). I'm deeply interested in your proposal for legislating against this terrible increase of the human race.

JAWLE (*shaking his head slowly*). I've no faith in legislation.

PALSAM. Perhaps a course of public meetings and lectures —

JAWLE (*shaking his head*). I've no faith in public meetings and lectures.

PALSAM (*distressed*). No? Perhaps talking to people — that's my way; when I see anybody doing anything wicked I talk to them.

JAWLE. I've no faith in talking to people.

PALSAM (*plaintively*). Dear me! Then what is to be done?

JAWLE (*authoritatively, with solemn conviction*). Nothing can be done!

FIGG (*has entered on stairs*). Jawle, the London Reformation Committee is just going to sit. I want you to give them your views.

JAWLE (*rising with great difficulty, to Palsam*). I'll trouble you for your arm.

(*Palsam gives it, and helps Jawle up stage to staircase.*)

(*To Figg on staircase.*) I'm not prepared for any large expenditure of vital force this afternoon.

[*Waddles up with Palsam.*

FIGG. No; you can just prove to them in a dozen words that they are utterly wrong and mistaken in all they're doing. That's all that's necessary.

[*Enter Philos, with telegrams. Palsam, going upstairs with Jawle, turns and calls to Philos.*

PALSAM. Mr. Ingarfield, in talking to Lord Burnham just now, you didn't lash the vices of high life. Think how much good it would do if we could make an example of somebody.

[*Philos, absorbed, takes no notice. Exeunt Palsam, Jawle, and Figg upstairs, and off, right. Una enters left.*

PHILOS (*reading telegrams*). Either I must forsake them and leave them to perish, or I must go through with it. And yet, how shall I leave her? (*Seeing Una.*) Well, comrade?

UNA (*shakes her head sadly*). I'm not your comrade now.

PHILOS. Yes, my comrade, my sister always.

UNA. No, I was your comrade three years ago, on that Sunday evening in the old garden when you first told my father and me all your dreams and plans. Ah! those old days! They'll never come again. How mad we were!

[*Laughs a little bitterly, goes two or three steps down stage, right.*

PHILOS (*rises, follows her*). These days are better. There's nothing changed.

UNA. Yes, the wind has (*with a little shiver*). You'll go to Costa Rica?

PHILOS. I must.

UNA. And leave your work here to — your comrade?

[*Glances up at him for a moment.*

PHILOS (*tenderly*). Yes, to you — and to —

UNA (*going away from him*). No, not to me; I mean to your new comrade.

[*Cynthia comes down stairs, right.*

PHILOS (*sees Cynthia*). Hush.

UNA (*running past him towards stairs, with a laugh*). Good luck to you and your new comrade!

[*Cynthia comes down, centre, rather indignantly, taking no notice of Una, flings herself rather angrily into chair.*

PHILOS (*goes to Cynthia, bends over her*). What is it?

UNA (*going upstairs, peeps through curtains; aside, bitterly*). She won't be his comrade for three years.

[*Exit Una.*

PHILOS (*bending over Cynthia*). What has displeased you?

CYNTHIA. Everything. They're quarrelling like bears. Oh, I'm tired of them! They're silly, and fussy, and selfish. You are the only one of us whose heart is in the work. All the money is legally mine. Take it all! Carry out your plans your own way!

PHILOS. Mrs. Greenslade — if I dared tell you.

CYNTHIA. What?

PHILOS. Perhaps you would despise me.

CYNTHIA. Despise you?

PHILOS. I will tell you. In two days I shall have left England.

CYNTHIA (*quickly, anxiously*). You must go?

PHILOS. Would you have me stay?

(*She looks at him, says nothing, turns, sits on sofa.*) Ah! you don't know what wild hopes you raise in me! I love you! (*Cynthia's face shows great satisfaction and pride through all the speech.*) You're life, and food, and air, and summer, and sun, and strength, and breath to me. Your presence is my very heaven. I love you! I have loved you ever since — ah, I must tell you — from the moment I saw you my life was changed! Before my heart was aware of it, I loved you; before I dared breathe it to myself! (*Dropping his voice.*) When you belonged to *him*, I found a secret passion in my soul I could not kill. I strove

against it, but it would rebel against me and live. Don't think me willingly base. Be sure my least thought has never sullied you. Be sure I would have gone through fire rather than breathe it to you. (*Pause, calmer.*) I could not crush it, so I turned its course. The love it would have been sacrilege and infamy to offer to you, I tried to fling broadcast among mankind, for your sake. You gave me new hopes, new ideals, new resolves. It was you that filled me with this great scheme. Your lips breathed it to me when you spoke the simplest words. My dream has been to make this great city wear some image of your beauty, catch some reflection from you, and be a fit resting-place for you, that you might breathe its air for a moment as you passed by.

CYNTHIA (*highly gratified, softly*). I like you to speak like this. How you love me! You make me feel I could do anything if you were beside me. Oh, let me help you! What can I do?

PHILOS. You love me! (*She looks down; he takes her hand.*) I know you do. Take up my work while I am away from England.

CYNTHIA (*pained*). Oh, but I don't want you to leave me!

PHILOS (*very tenderly*). You don't wish me to do my duty?

CYNTHIA. Yes, of course, but I don't want you to leave me.

PHILOS (*after a pause, sad, resigned*). I'll stay.

CYNTHIA. No,—go! I won't say another word.

PHILOS. Una Dell will help us. She's beaten gold.

CYNTHIA. I don't want any one to help you except me. I want it to be all our work.

PHILOS. Let it be ours; but if you need a counsellor at any time, go to her.

CYNTHIA. How long shall you be away?

PHILOS. Six months at most.

CYNTHIA. Oh, but that's eternity! It's cruel of you. Must you go?

PHILOS (*after a pause*). No, I'll stay.

[*Sighs.*

CYNTHIA. No, no; it's selfish of me.

PHILOS. It's selfish of me to ask you to share such a life as mine. Have you counted the cost? It will not be easy.

CYNTHIA. You doubt me? I'll take any vow, any promise —

PHILOS. There is no need of that.

CYNTHIA. You trust me?

PHILOS. As my own soul. When I return, it will be to claim my bride?

CYNTHIA. There's my hand; it's yours.

PHILOS (*takes it, kisses it reverently, whispers*). Your lips? (*She bends towards him; he is about to kiss her.*) No. I would have you still above me, still out of my reach. And let it show how sacred was my love for you, that lest there should be the least dishonour in my first love for you, I will not kiss your lips till I return. You'll keep that kiss for me?

CYNTHIA. Till you return to claim your bride.

[*He kisses her hand again reverently.*

CURTAIN

(*Fifteen months pass between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE. *The Cottages and Rose-farm at Wimbledon. Two deeply thatched cottages, one on left side running from footlights up to back of stage; the other and larger one is built diagonally across stage on the right. They are both very quaint and old-fashioned, and are completely smothered in roses of all kinds. Roses everywhere about the garden. Doors leading into each cottage. An arch of roses stretches from one cottage to another at back. Garden seats and an old tree-trunk down stage. It is the height of summer. A summer sunset at the beginning of act; moonlight during the later part.*

Enter Dick in evening dress from door of cottage at back; comes down to back of garden seat, looks up at balcony.

DICK. How much longer do you mean to keep me dangling after you, madam? I've wasted fifteen months on your committee, and I've neither reformed London, nor unreformed you. (*Walking up towards balcony.*) I wonder whether she knows where that Ingarfield fellow really is. He's been back in England more than a week. I've bowled him out. But when does my innings begin? (*Looking round.*) I've a good mind to risk it to-night.

(*Goes up balcony steps cautiously.*)

(*Enter from cottage at back Lord Burnham in evening dress, with telegrams and despatches in hand, evidently excited and in bad temper.*)

(*On balcony, opens window.*) Window open! Her room! (*Looks in, comes back to front.*) It's too bad to throw temptation in my way like this!

LORD BURNHAM (*turning in vexation, catches sight of Dick*). Dick!

DICK (*surprised, comes hurriedly down*). Sir?

LORD BURNHAM. What the devil are you doing there?

DICK (*lamely*). I was just a — (*Seeing the despatches in Lord Burnham's hand.*) More bad news from Costa Rica, sir?

LORD BURNHAM. I wish Costa Rica was at the bottom of the sea!

DICK (*following him*). Who could have imagined that confounded Ingarfield would have got us into such a mess with the Costa Rica government?

LORD BURNHAM. Who could have imagined anything else?

[*Sits on garden seat.*

DICK. We can't really be liable.

LORD BURNHAM. We gave a guarantee that he should look after his damned ne'er-do-wells. Well, naturally the Costa Rica government say the ne'er-do-wells were n't looked after, or the rioting and plundering would never have happened; and we shall have to pay four or five million damages.

DICK (*cheerfully*). There must be some way out of it. International law is so jolly foggy. Can't we bring a big claim against Costa Rica for unlawfully imprisoning Ingarfield?

LORD BURNHAM. It was his escape that was unlawful. They're demanding we should send him back to stand his trial.

DICK. Well, let's catch him, and send him back, and tell them to take it out of him.

LORD BURNHAM. So I would, but the political dissenters have taken it up, and they're making a hero and a martyr of Ingarfield. This country would be easy to govern if it were not for the political dissenters. They're calling mass-meetings against the government everywhere — Manchester to-morrow, Newcastle on Thursday. (*Rises angrily, comes up to Dick.*) Now understand me, I've had enough of this tomfoolery!

DICK. You don't call reforming London tomfoolery, sir?

LORD BURNHAM. Reform my grandmother!

DICK. Well, sir, you're President, and if you bring forward a comprehensive scheme of ancestral improvement, I daresay we can work it in.

LORD BURNHAM (*hurt*). It's good taste to jeer at me, Dick, after having ruined my reputation before the country!

DICK. I beg your pardon, sir.

LORD BURNHAM. Then don't disgrace me any further!

DICK. What do you mean?

LORD BURNHAM. You're a married man. People are talking about you and Mrs. Greenslade.

DICK. On my honour, there's been no more than a harmless flirtation.

LORD BURNHAM. Then break it off, give up your house down here, come back to town with me to-night, and don't see her any more.

DICK (*shuffling away*). I can't come back to-night.

LORD BURNHAM. You won't? I haven't been a bad father to you, Dick.

DICK. I promise you, sir, there shall be no occasion for any future gossip about me and that lady.

[*Holds out hand.*

LORD BURNHAM (*looks at him*). I believe you. (*Takes hand, shakes it cordially.*) And we'll give up reforming London. I've had enough of it. I shall resign at once. If we could only find where this fellow Ingarfield is! Read those.

(*Gives telegrams and despatches to Dick, who goes to seat and reads them.*)

(*Cynthia in evening dress, without wrap, enters from cottage at back, comes down.*)

I wish the Costa Rica people had hanged him—

DICK. Eh?

LORD BURNHAM. By mistake. They could have apologised for it.

CYNTHIA. What 's the matter, Lord Burnham?

LORD BURNHAM. I 'm very sorry, Mrs. Greenslade, that we ever tried our hand at improving this very excellent planet, just as it was revolving on its own axis so comfortably.

CYNTHIA. You 've heard of the public meeting.

LORD BURNHAM. At Newcastle?

CYNTHIA. Newcastle? No; here in Wimbledon.

LORD BURNHAM. Wimbledon?

CYNTHIA. The residents have summoned a public meeting calling upon us to remove the rose-farm, because they say the rose-farming girls have not been behaving nicely, and are spoiling the neighbourhood.

LORD BURNHAM. They don't put it down to the government?

CYNTHIA. No; not at present.

LORD BURNHAM. That 's lucky. I must resign my presidency before they do.

CYNTHIA. Oh, you won't desert us just as everything is going wrong!

LORD BURNHAM. I'm afraid I must.

DICK (*aside, looking at Cynthia*). She 's more charming than ever. What a fool I was to promise to give her up! I won't!

LORD BURNHAM. You told me Mr. Ingarfield might be here to-night.

CYNTHIA (*embarrassed*). I thought he might be.

[*Turns away.*

LORD BURNHAM. You 've not seen him since his return from Costa Rica?

CYNTHIA. No.

LORD BURNHAM. It would be wise for him to meet me.

CYNTHIA. Why won't you tell me if the government will send him back to stand his trial?

LORD BURNHAM. I must not pledge myself. Are you in personal communication with him?

CYNTHIA. No; but I could send him a message.

LORD BURNHAM. Tell him I wish to see him at once in your presence—

CYNTHIA. In my presence?

LORD BURNHAM. Is there any objection?

CYNTHIA. No. When and where shall it be?

LORD BURNHAM. If I could see him before the Cabinet meeting to-morrow afternoon. Would to-morrow at eleven here be convenient to you?

CYNTHIA. Yes. (*Aside.*) I shall have to meet him!

[*Looks rather perplexed.*

[*Palsam in evening dress enters from cottage at back, comes gingerly down.*

[*Dick has risen, brings telegrams and despatches to Lord Burnham.*

DICK. What's to be done, sir?

LORD BURNHAM. Resign, go to the country, and get kicked out. (*Catching sight of Palsam.*) Here's that little mongrel!

[*Hurries to garden seat, sits, and assumes profound interest in the despatches.*

[*Dick hurriedly crosses over to Cynthia, talks with her.*

[*Palsam looks on each side to see whom he shall victimise.*

[*Worrell enters from cottage at back with coffee on tray, comes down to Cynthia and Dick, gives them coffee.*

[*Palsam finally decides to victimise Lord Burnham, comes to back of garden seat, leans amiably over to Lord Burnham, who is profoundly occupied with his despatches.*

[*Cynthia and Dick take coffee from Worrell.*

PALSAM (*coughs, fidgets, then in a very insinuating way*). How very terrible these recent turf-frauds are, my lord!

LORD BURNHAM (*without looking up*). Shocking! Shocking!

PALSAM. And one of your trainers was concerned.

LORD BURNHAM. Was he?

PALSAM (*in his pleasantest manner, with a sweet insinuating smile*). Can't I tempt you to give up horse-racing, my lord?

LORD BURNHAM (*with affable contempt, in quite an indifferent tone*). I don't think so, Mr. Palsam. I don't think so.

(*Calls Dick from Cynthia, takes him a step or two up stage.*)

(*Worrell crosses with coffee to Palsam.*)

(*Pointing out something in despatch as if calling Dick's attention to it; in a low tone to Dick.*) If somebody does n't kick Palsam, I shall.

[*Pockets despatches.*

DICK. I think I would.

[*Talks to Cynthia.*

CYNTHIA (*to Worrell, who is going up stage*). Worrell!

(*Worrell stops. Palsam watches him suspiciously.*)

Ask Victorine to bring my lace shawl.

WORRELL. Yes, madam.

[*Exit into cottage right, watched by Palsam, who, the moment he has gone off, turns to Cynthia.*

PALSAM. Is that — quite — prudent?

CYNTHIA (*blankly*). What?

PALSAM. There was quite a guilty look on his face when you mentioned Victorine.

CYNTHIA (*stares at Palsam, calmly*). What *do* you mean, Mr. Palsam?

PALSAM (*quickly, nervously*). Oh, I don't positively accuse him; but she *is* French, you know.

CYNTHIA. Worrell is a most respectable man.

PALSAM (*eagerly*). That's it! that's it! You never know what's underneath outward respectability.

CYNTHIA (*rises, calmly indignant*). I don't wish to know.

PALSAM (*aside*). There's something wrong going on

here. I feel it's my duty to miss my last train and find out what it is. I will!

[*Victorine, a smart, good-looking French maid, enters from cottage at back with Cynthia's shawl.*

VICTORINE. Madame's shawl.

(*Dick takes shawl from Victorine and goes down to Cynthia with it. Palsam watches Victorine very closely. Dick wraps shawl round Cynthia.*)

Which cottage will madame please to occupy to-night?

CYNTHIA. My own, Victorine.

[*Dick, who is cloaking Cynthia, shows that he notices this.*

[*Worrell enters, collects coffee cups, waits.*

VICTORINE. And Madame Blake?

CYNTHIA. Mrs. Blake will stay as usual in her own rooms in the visitors' cottage.

PALSAM (*aside*). That creature is asking those questions for some purpose. (*To Cynthia.*) Don't you find it very inconvenient having visitors here?

CYNTHIA. Rather, the cottages being divided.

PALSAM. How do you arrange the — a — accommodation?

CYNTHIA. I reserve that cottage (*pointing left*) entirely for my lady visitors, and I send my gentlemen to the little inn — it's very comfortable. My own rooms and the reception-rooms are all on that side. (*Pointing right.*) Why?

PALSAM. Oh, nothing, nothing.

[*Watches Victorine and Worrell.*

WORRELL (*has been watching his chance to speak to Cynthia*). Mr. Portal is in the drawing-room, madame, and would like to see you and Lord Burnham.

LORD BURNHAM. See me?

CYNTHIA. He is the curate here. I suppose he has come about the rose-farmers.

PALSAM (*all alive with curiosity*). We'd better all go into the drawing-room. My lord — if you'll come —

LORD BURNHAM. Thank you. I'm very comfortable where I am.

[*Seated with Cynthia.*

CYNTHIA. Show Mr. Portal to us here.

[*Exit Worrell at back.*

VICTORINE (*waiting*). Madame has no further commands?

CYNTHIA. Wait for me in my sitting-room downstairs, Victorine.

[*Exit Victorine at back.*

PALSAM. It's terrible to think what may have been going on at this rose-farm in our absence. This matter must be thoroughly probed. (*In great glee.*) We must n't shrink from knowing the truth merely because it may be shocking and disgusting.

[*Fussing — all alert.*

[*Enter Worrell at back, showing in the Rev. Algernon Portal, a bland curate, with lank, sandy hair, and precise, rather nervous manners.*

WORRELL (*announces*). Mr. Portal!

[*Exit Worrell.*

PORTAL (*with precise, nervous, cordial manner*). My dear Mrs. Greenslade, I've taken the really unpardonable liberty of calling at this hour because I heard that Lord Burnham was with you.

[*Nervous little chuckle — looking at Lord Burnham.*

CYNTHIA (*presents*). Mr. Portal — Lord Burnham.

PORTAL. I am charged to convey to you a very important decision arrived at by the inhabitants of Wimbledon with respect to these young persons employed on your rose-farm —

PALSAM (*very distressed and agitated*). Dear me! dear me!

PORTAL (*glances at Palsam sympathisingly*). Yes, it is indeed a painful subject. (*Turns to Lord Burnham.*) I thought it might be advantageous to you, Lord Burnham, to know that unless the rose-farm is imme-

diately removed from Wimbledon, our member will question the Home Secretary on the subject. I need not add, the inhabitants of Wimbledon are warm supporters of the government, but — really — you — a — understand.

[*Ends in a little nervous chuckle.*

LORD BURNHAM. Not quite. Who is aggrieved?

PORTAL. The better class of residents in Wimbledon. I have had constant complaints.

PALSAM. Dear me!

PORTAL (*looks sympathisingly at Palsam*). Ye-es! (*Turns to Lord Burnham.*) Wimbledon being a respectable residential neighbourhood, of course the mission of the Church in a respectable neighbourhood is — a — naturally to attend to the needs of the respectable residential — a — a — residents, and really, when a quantity of badly behaved persons are brought into a respectable neighbourhood, I am sure, my lord, you 'll agree with me that a — it is — a — (*nervous little chuckle*) a — most embarrassing.

LORD BURNHAM. Decidedly, Mr. Portal, wicked people are very embarrassing, and the question what to do with them — both in this world and the next — is beset with difficulties.

CYNTHIA. But we have engaged most respectable matrons.

PORTAL. I fear you cannot rely upon them.

PALSAM. I knew those matrons were n't to be trusted.

PORTAL. The most extraordinary conduct is frequent.

PALSAM. Dear me! dear me!

PORTAL. I have myself witnessed — a —

PALSAM (*eagerly*). Yes — what?

PORTAL. Some very indecorous behaviour.

PALSAM. Could you point out the young persons?

PORTAL. There is one in particular. She is known amongst her companions as the Queen of the Marshal Neils.

CYNTHIA. But that's our model girl!

DICK (*half aside*). What must all the rest be like!

PALSAM. My lord, this is terrible, and I think you, as President —

LORD BURNHAM. I trust I shall not be held responsible for the very natural consequences of taking these poor, ignorant women from a state of semi-starvation, feeding them well, and turning them loose in a place like this. Excuse me, Mr. Portal (*rises*), I cannot consider this as any business of mine.

[*Takes out cigar-case, selects cigar.*

PALSAM. Oh, my lord, when anything wicked is taking place, it's everybody's business — it's your business, it's my business —

LORD BURNHAM. Ah, well, then, perhaps you'll be good enough to attend to it while I smoke my cigar.

[*Exit along garden path.*

PALSAM. Mr. Portal, we must look into this at once. If you'll come with me, I'll conduct you to these young women's quarters. Mrs. Greenslade, perhaps you'll accompany us, and then we can thoroughly discuss all the particulars.

CYNTHIA. I really can't leave my guests.

PALSAM. Come along, Mr. Portal.

(*Portal joins him at back of seat; affectionately links his arm in Portal's, and takes him up to archway at back. As they are going off, looks up at Portal.*)

Of what nature was this indecorous behaviour?

[*Exit with Portal very slowly at archway.*

[*Dick watches Palsam off, comes to back of seat.*

DICK. Mrs. Greenslade —

CYNTHIA. Well?

DICK. I've promised my father to break it off.

CYNTHIA. Break what off?

DICK. My attachment to you.

CYNTHIA. Shall you keep your promise?

DICK. Yes — after to-morrow.

CYNTHIA. Why not to-night?

DICK (*approaching her passionately*). Because this place was built on purpose to play Romeo and Juliet —

CYNTHIA. Indeed it was n't; it was built for a farm-house.

DICK (*passionately*). Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Take care! Mrs. Blake can see us.

DICK (*following her*). I 've followed you like a spaniel, and how have you rewarded me?

CYNTHIA. I 've given you thousands of civil words, hundreds of smiles, dozens of roses, and several pressures of the hand.

DICK. Do you call that rewarding?

CYNTHIA. You talk of "rewarding"? You don't know what love means.

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake enters from the cottage, door at right.*

DICK. Cynthia, for Heaven's sake don't play cat and mouse with me any longer! Tell me, is there any hope?

[*Leans over the seat close to her.*

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake comes down behind Dick.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Bad children! (*Dick steps backwards, Cynthia shows a little confusion.*) Bad children! (*To Dick.*) Run away! I want to speak to Mrs. Greenslade. (*More commandingly.*) Run away! I 'm ashamed of you!

[*Comes left of seat beside Cynthia.*

[*Dick exit sulkily, right.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*very reprovingly*). Now, my dear, this must positively stop!

CYNTHIA (*innocently*). What must?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Don't fence! If Mr. Palsam finds out anything, what will be the end of it?

CYNTHIA. Oh, Mr. Palsam is so busy suspecting all the innocent people, he has no time to attend to —

[*Stops, confused.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The guilty!

CYNTHIA. No — no, indeed!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Well, shall we say — the not proven?

CYNTHIA. But you encouraged Mr. Rusper's visits.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I know I did. I wanted him and his father to join the League. How was I to know that you would be so foolish as to allow him to make love to you? However, now that the Duchess of Launceston has joined us, we can do very well without them. The Duchess is the dearest woman! the sweetest woman! — I never met with any woman with whom I had so much real sympathy as the Duchess! — but she is just a little bit prudish, and I would n't have that dear creature's name connected with the faintest breath of scandal.

CYNTHIA (*a little hotly*). You need not fear. There will be no scandal.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. That 's precisely what Lady Barringer said the very night before she eloped with her groom. Now, my dear, for the duchess's sake as well as for your own, you must give Mr. Rusper his *congé*. Besides, was n't there some kind of an understanding between you and Mr. Ingarfield?

[*Watching Cynthia closely.*

CYNTHIA (*rather confused*). No — at least — I did think I cared for him, but that was more than a year ago.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. He has no claim on you?

CYNTHIA. No — except — well, I was foolish enough to promise him one kiss when he returned from Costa Rica, but I meant at the end of a few weeks or months, and I did n't suppose that everything was going wrong as it has done.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Just so! We must reorganise the reformation of London on a totally new basis. Burnham wants to resign. We 'll let him. Mr. Palsam and

Mr. Ingarfield must both be got rid of, and we must take the matter into our own hands.

CYNTHIA. Whose hands?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Yours and mine, with the duchess for President. And then we shall reform London in real earnest.

CYNTHIA. But the duchess is very high church, and Mr. Greenslade detested high church.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. My dear, poor Mr. Greenslade was not in a fit mental state to be able to judge; it requires a very profound intellect to understand such things. Depend on it, it's the only way.

(*Cynthia walks slowly to right and plucks roses.*)

(*Looking at Cynthia*). Ingarfield will spoil everything again if he interferes. He must be got rid of somehow! The duchess would never endure him!

[*Exit into cottage, left.*

CYNTHIA. Throw over Mr. Ingarfield! I wish Una Dell would come. I wonder if my letter reached her.

[*Goes up to balcony-steps behind seat.*

[*Enter at back Burge Jawle and Figg in evening dress. Jawle continues his discourse as he waddles down stage. Figg brings cushion to seat, very obsequious and attentive.*

JAWLE. Yes, the feminine nature is essentially vile, small, narrow, malignant, treacherous — (*Pauses, surveys the different seats, sees comfortable corner*). I think I will occupy that seat. (*Waddles up to it, arranges his cushion, makes himself comfortable.*) I have not assimilated that cold veal pie I had for breakfast yesterday morning.

[*Tapping his chest.*

FIGG. No. I've never been able to understand the rabid admiration current in artistic circles for what is nauseously termed the female form divine.

JAWLE (*arranging his cushion*). True! (*Leans, comfortably.*) The natural outline of the female figure

is hideous and repellant in the extreme.

CYNTHIA (*comes down to seat with her rose*). What are you saying, Mr. Jawle?

JAWLE. The truth. Take your own case. You are supposed to have considerable personal attractions. Analyse your personal attractions. Take a microscope. Look at your hand. (*Taking her hand.*) What is it? A coarse, scaly epidermis, studded with huge bristles —

CYNTHIA (*angrily withdrawing her hand*). But ladies' hands are not meant to be looked at under microscopes.

JAWLE. What are they meant for?

CYNTHIA (*looking at her hand, holding it up in front of her*). To be kissed on great occasions.

JAWLE (*shakes his head*). Go a step further. Your so-called beauty is built up by the process of nutrition. Follow the stages of nutrition —

CYNTHIA (*disgusted*). Oh, please not, just after dinner!

JAWLE (*to Figg*). See how people resent the truth!

[*Composes himself. Figg shrugs his shoulders and lifts his eyebrows in sympathy, rises, and goes down to Cynthia. Jawle places his hands on his stomach, and goes into a reverie.*

[*Lights appear in the cottage windows.*

FIGG (*to Cynthia*). You must n't be offended with him. We shall not have him with us long.

CYNTHIA. What do you mean?

FIGG. He has finished the last volume of his social philosophy. By the way, what is the depth of that large pond at the end of the grounds?

CYNTHIA. From six to nine feet. Why?

FIGG. *Nothing.* He contemplated it for more than an hour this morning. I've always thought that the end would come by drowning.

CYNTHIA. Surely Mr. Jawle is not in earnest?

FIGG (*in a tone of benevolent pity*). Not in earnest?

CYNTHIA. At least he won't do it here?

FIGG (*solemnly*). Everything is prepared. I am his sole executor.

[*All the while Jawle remains in absorbed contemplation, quite regardless.*

CYNTHIA (*rather alarmed*). Then, if there is the least danger of his doing anything so foolish and wicked, I beg you 'll take him back to town to-night. Tell him so, please! I really can't have it happen here.

[*Goes up, meets Lord Burnham, then comes down, and sits on rockwork, left.*

[*Figg goes over to Jawle, looks at him. Jawle remains sublimely unconscious. Figg assumes a worshipful attitude.*

[*Lord Burnham and Dick stroll on, right, smoking. Dick sees Figg worshipping Jawle, and stays at back of seat to look at Jawle.*

FIGG (*to Dick*). *How wonderful!* He has the rarest faculty for burying himself.

DICK. Ah! that 'll come in useful when he commits suicide.

[*Strolls up to balcony steps, and sits and smokes.*

[*Enter from archway at back Palsam, very excited and self-important.*

PALSAM (*coming on a step or two, calls off*). This way, madam (*very sternly*)!

(*Enter at archway the Queen of the Marshal Neils, a saucy, sly, pretty, common London girl, in a smart cotton gown. She comes in with a great affectation of modesty and shamefacedness, curtseying profoundly all round.*)

(*Calls off.*) You, madam, stay there till you 're wanted. We shall require you, Mr. Portal. My lord, you said this was no business of yours — listen to this! (*Portal comes in at archway rather bashfully; Palsam follows a step or two on his right, very severe and consequential; motions the Queen to step forward.*)

Now! The whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

QUEEN (*coming forward, curtseying*). Oh, if you please, sir, and kind ladies and gentlemen all, it's no denying there have been dreadful carryings on, and such conduct as it's made my heart bleed for to see. But it is n't me! It's all that Glory Deejohn!

PALSAM. Take care, hussy! I have the plainest evidence against you!

QUEEN. Have you, sir?

PALSAM (*taking out pencil and pocketbook*). And I shall take down every word you say.

QUEEN (*snivel — snivel — and then a sudden outburst of tears*). Oh, if you please, ladies and gentlemen, there never was a poor girl so worrited and buffeted with temptation as I've been; and if I have give way at times, there have been other times when I've been quite a pattern!

PALSAM. A pattern!

QUEEN. Yes, sir. Ask any of the girls else. I've talked to 'em about the wickedness of their ways, till I've drawed streaming tears down their cheeks. And the bewtiful language I've used! I'm sure the dear good gentleman himself (*glancing at Portal, ogling him*) could n't have used more bewtiful language than I did! (*Portal moves a little, coughs, blushes, and looks nervous.*) Oh, sir (*to Portal, with a renewed burst of tears*), you would have been joyful if you could have heard me! (*Further embarrassment on the part of Portal.*) And several other dear, kind gentlemen have been quite struck with the pretty innocence of my ways. And now to stand here and be scorned and inspected by everybody!

(*Again bursts into tears.*)

(*Figg has been listening attentively to the foregoing proceeding. Jawle has been perfectly absorbed, his large bland face lifted upwards, quite regardless of what has taken place.*)

(*The Lady Gloire de Dijon enters at left archway.*)

(*Recovering from her sobs.*) It can't be me, because my conscience always accuses me when I 've done wrong, and my conscience don't accuse me a bit. It 's a case of mistaken idemnity — it 's that Glory Deejohn that 's at the bottom of it. Oh, she is a real downright bad lot, that Glory Deejohn is! If I was to tell you all —

PALSAM (*encouragingly*). Go on! go on!

[*The Lady Gloire de Dijon runs down to the side of Palsam.*

LADY GLOIRE (*bursting in*). Ask her to tell you all about 'erself! Why, on'y last Sunday evening as ever was —

QUEEN (*very quickly*). Oh! oh! oh! Glory Deejohn, how can you stand there and tell such wicked falsehoods, and not be afraid as something 'll happen to you! Oh! (*Appealing to Portal*). On'y fancy, good gentleman, on Sunday evening, after listening to them lovely words as flowed from your lips — (*Portal again shows embarrassment.*) Oh! I blush for you, Glory Deejohn! — I blush for you!

LADY GLOIRE. Blush for yourself!

[*Rushes at Queen.*

PALSAM (*authoritatively*). Silence!

(*Lady Gloire and Queen both make motions as if about to speak.*)

Silence! We all wish to learn (*Lord Burnham takes out his watch*) about last Sunday evening.

LORD BURNHAM (*stepping forward*). Excuse me, I don't. I 've only ten minutes to catch my train back to town.

[*Lady Gloire comes down to front of seat, and an angry dispute in dumb show takes place between her and the Queen.*

PALSAM. But, my lord, it 's most important!

LORD BURNHAM. Thank you; I think I can dispense with knowing what happened on Sunday evening.

(*Palsam, rather snubbed, goes to Queen and Lady Gloire, who are quarrelling.*)

(*Takes an envelope out of pocket.*) Mrs. Greenslade. (*Cynthia comes to him.*) I've scribbled a few lines to Mr. Ingarfield. Will you see that he has them to-night?

CYNTHIA (*taking letter, putting it in pocket*). Yes, if possible.

LORD BURNHAM. Thank you.

LADY GLOIRE (*loudly*). Ask Miss Pattison else!

QUEEN. Well, ask Miss Pattison!

LORD BURNHAM. Dick, you'll come to the station with me?

DICK. Certainly, sir.

LORD BURNHAM (*goes to Portal*). Good evening, Mr. Portal. You have my sincere sympathy in your efforts to preserve the respectability of Wimbledon.

PORTAL. What would you recommend should be done with these young — a — persons?

LORD BURNHAM (*glancing at the group of Palsam, Queen, and Lady Gloire*). I should leave them entirely in Mr. Palsam's hands.

PALSAM. Silence! I will subject Miss Pattison to a strict cross-examination. (*Takes out watch.*) I shall have time to question her before the rose-song is sung. Go back to the dormitories — at once!

[*They pass in front of him, Lady Gloire first. Queen turns round and curtsies elaborately.*

QUEEN (*ogling Portal*). The dear good gentleman will stipify to my innocence!

PORTAL (*very embarrassed*). Really — I was n't there!

[*Exeunt Queen and Lady Gloire. Palsam follows them.*

PALSAM (*pushes them off*). Go away, you hussies!

[*They go off quarrelling.*

LORD BURNHAM (*turns to Cynthia*). Are those our model girls?

CYNTHIA. Yes.

LORD BURNHAM. I trust we have n't reformed the others. Come, Dick.

[*Exit. Cynthia has offered hand to Dick.*

DICK. I'll say "Good-night" on my way back from the station (*dropping his voice to a low aside to her*), if it must be said.

[*Looks at her meaningly. She just glances at him and comes down to seat. Exit Dick.*

[*Pause. Lights in window, left. Portal goes towards Cynthia. Figg and Jawle have been watching. Jawle suddenly emits his gurgling, melancholy chuckle.*

CYNTHIA (*rather sharply*). What's the matter, Mr. Jawle?

JAWLE (*elated, in his melancholy way*). I cannot refrain from a smile when human nature illustrates my theories.

PORTAL (*rather embarrassed, to Cynthia*). I'm sure you will see that a residential neighbourhood like Wimbledon is scarcely the place for rose-farmers.

CYNTHIA. But where can I take them?

PORTAL. I should say there are remote country parishes where they would be quite — quite a welcome addition to the population. I'll call for your decision next Wednesday, before the meeting. In the meantime, good-evening!

[*Exit Portal at back.*

[*Jawle emits another melancholy chuckle.*

FIGG (*coming to Cynthia*). Oh, by the way, I've persuaded Jawle to accept that other two hundred pounds to publish the last volume of his philosophy — I was careful not to hurt his feelings.

CYNTHIA. I'm glad of that!

(*Jawle chuckles again.*)

(*Showing annoyance.*) You seem pleased that the rose-farm is discredited.

JAWLE (*solemnly*). My dear lady, if people will act in direct contravention of those great principles laid down in my philosophy, what can they expect but discomfiture and failure?

[*Worrell enters door at back with Figg's and Jawle's*

hats and overcoats; comes down and puts them on during following scene.

CYNTHIA. But what can be done with these poor girls?

JAWLE (*rises and majestically waddles towards her*). *Nothing* can be done! Charity is merely a form of refined selfishness. You see distress; you are pained; to relieve your pain you scatter benefits broadcast, which corrupt both the giver and the receiver. (*Looks round, fidgets.*) This night air is noxious, and my vital processes are so slow!

[*A little shiver; beckons Worrell, who gives hats and coats to Jawle.*

FIGG (*to Cynthia*). You must let me bring my new poet to you. I call him *my* poet, because I discovered him.

CYNTHIA. Oh, did you?

FIGG. Yes; quite by accident, in a little street off the Harrow Road. He's a superb genius! His name's Radbone.

CYNTHIA. Radbone?

FIGG. Yes; he's the sternest pessimist — sterner even than Jawle. Nobody has seized the inner core of the Harrow Road and Paddington like Radbone.

CYNTHIA. Oh! I don't know him.

FIGG. No; the herd — I do not use the word in an offensive sense — the herd do not know Radbone. But they shall. I am organising a Radbone Society. You'll expect us here to breakfast?

[*Exit Worrell, having finished with Jawle.*

CYNTHIA. Oh, yes, yes!

JAWLE. To breakfast?

CYNTHIA. Yes.

JAWLE (*mysteriously, as if pondering*). Um — (*a long grunt*) — to breakfast?

CYNTHIA. You'll come, of course!

JAWLE (*mysteriously*). Possibly, possibly! (*Waddles off slowly, jealously looking at Figg.*) Radbone!

[*Figg goes after him.*

CYNTHIA (*following them up*). Surely he does not intend —

FIGG (*hurriedly*). I trust not! I think not! If I should observe anything, I'll let you know. Good-night!

[*Exit hurriedly after Jawle.*

CYNTHIA (*watches them off*). How could I have been so foolish as to ask them here!

[*Enter Worrell at back. Una appears at door.*

WORRELL. Miss Dell!

CYNTHIA. I'll come! (*Seeing Una.*) No; I'll see Miss Dell here.

(*Una comes down stage. Gives hand, which Una takes after a slight hesitation.*)

You received my letter, then?

UNA. Yes. What do you want with me?

CYNTHIA. Where is Mr. Ingarfield?

UNA. His address is secret.

CYNTHIA. From me?

UNA. From everybody, till he knows whether the Government will give him up.

CYNTHIA. But I wish to help him.

UNA. Aren't you rather late?

CYNTHIA (*turns away, ashamed*). Late?

UNA. The moment he reached England he wrote to you he was coming to you. He has called at your house in London each evening, and the only answer has been, "Mrs. Greenslade is away from home, but all letters will be forwarded."

CYNTHIA (*comes down a few steps, hangs her head, and speaks in a low, ashamed voice.*) What does he think of me?

UNA. He thinks you are a model of constancy and devotion.

CYNTHIA (*very angrily, coming towards her*). Don't jeer at me!

UNA. I'm not jeering! You asked me what he thought of you. I've told you.

CYNTHIA. He does not know — or suspect —

UNA. Suspect you? He thinks you are away travelling — abroad, perhaps — and every time you are denied to him, he says, "How she will grieve when she knows!"

CYNTHIA. Poor fellow! You have not told him —

UNA. Why should I tell him? He'll learn soon enough that —

[*Stops.*

CYNTHIA. That what?

UNA. That fifteen months is long for a woman's devotion to last!

CYNTHIA. Why do you taunt me? I'm doing all I can for his safety. Only to-night I have offered Lord Burnham everything — all the Greenslade bequest — if the Government will not give him up.

UNA. What does Lord Burnham say?

CYNTHIA. He wishes to see Mr. Ingarfield at once. Here is a letter. (*Producing letter.*) Will you give it to Mr. Ingarfield?

UNA (*taking letter*). Yes.

CYNTHIA. To-night?

UNA. Yes.

CYNTHIA. He is in London?

UNA. No, not in London; but I'll take it to him. Good-night!

[*Going up stage.*

CYNTHIA. Good-night. (*Suddenly.*) Stay!

UNA (*coming down*). What is it?

CYNTHIA (*pacing backwards and forwards, undecided*). No — I cannot — and yet he must know. Will you take a message to him from me?

UNA (*comes down to Cynthia*). Go on!

CYNTHIA (*kindly*). You are his friend, his sister. He told me so.

UNA (*in the calmest, most indifferent tone*). Yes; he was my father's friend, and I saw a great deal of him some years ago; and we love the same strange truths that nobody else believes in.

CYNTHIA. How is he? He's not ill?

UNA. No — not ill; worn and exhausted after all he has gone through, but strong with hope and courage, and (*very softly*) love for you!

CYNTHIA (*cries out*). Oh, how will he bear to know that — that I have changed!

[*Sits on seat; buries her face in her hands.*

UNA (*approaches her, puts the question very quietly, but with intense interest*). Changed? Have you changed so that you can never love him again?

CYNTHIA. I cannot help it. I did love him truly and faithfully — at least, I thought I did; but month after month I've found myself caring less and less for him! I would love him if I could, but my heart will not be driven — tell him so. Oh, I've begun to write to him dozens of times, but I've been too cowardly; and when I heard last week he had come back to England, I ran away because I was afraid to meet him and tell him my love was dead!

UNA (*same outwardly calm, indifferent tone*). And you wish me to break the news to him?

CYNTHIA. I wish to save him pain. The blow will be kinder from a friend's hand than mine.

UNA. Very well! I'm his friend. I'll send the dagger into his heart.

CYNTHIA (*rising angrily, crosses to centre*). Don't speak to me like that! Don't you see how wretched I am? Send him to me! I'll wait here for him, and tell him the truth myself!

[*Walks angrily backwards and forwards.*

UNA. No. You are right. It will be softer to come from me.

CYNTHIA. You'll be very gentle with him?

UNA. Oh yes; I'll kill him kindly.

CYNTHIA. Why can't you spare me? You make me feel as if I were murdering him! I would love him if I could. Tell him so, and tell him that all I have in the world is freely his.

UNA. All you have in the world is freely his.

CYNTHIA. Except my heart.

UNA. Except your heart.

CYNTHIA. Come to-morrow, and let me know how he bears it.

UNA. I will. Which is the nearest way to the station?

CYNTHIA. I'll send one of the servants.

[*Goes towards cottage, centre.*

UNA. No. Nobody will harm me. The nearest way?

CYNTHIA (*pointing off left*). That way takes you into the footpath.

UNA (*going off down stage, curtly*). Thank you. Good-night!

CYNTHIA (*comes down to her very tenderly and kindly*). Oh, don't let him think me heartless and unkind — indeed I'm not — (*Suddenly.*) Kiss me!

UNA. Kiss you? Do you think I want to teach my lips the trick of breaking faith?

CYNTHIA (*furious*). How dare you? how dare you?

UNA (*laughs*). Dare? I'm going to break his heart with your message. Dare?

[*Laughs. Is going. Cynthia, maddened, takes her by the shoulder. Una turns, faces Cynthia.*

CYNTHIA. You love him!

UNA (*close to Cynthia, looking straight at her*). Yes, I love him!

[*Exit down stage, left. Cynthia, maddened, walks up and down the stage, and then throws herself into a seat. The moon is rising.*

[*Dick enters behind her at the rose-arch; comes up to her.*

DICK. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Leave me! I hate you!

DICK (*following her*). Hate me?

CYNTHIA (*pacing backwards and forwards*). Yes; you have made me break my word and despise myself.

DICK. I'd break my word a thousand times for you!

CYNTHIA (*still pacing contemptuously*). Would you?

DICK. I'd sell myself body and soul for you!

CYNTHIA (*contemptuously*). Would you?

DICK. Upon my honour I would!

CYNTHIA (*stops; same contemptuous tone*). Would you sell your honour too?

DICK (*comes down to her; tries to put his arms round her*). Yes, my honour too!

CYNTHIA (*contemptuous laugh; gets away from him*). Your honour? Would you?

DICK (*coming to her*). Don't trifle with me any longer, Cynthia. See what a fool you make of me! I don't care how long I dance after you — if you only love me at last.

CYNTHIA. Then let it be at last! I don't think I've yet sunk low enough. Good-night!

[*Getting away from him up stage.*

DICK (*goes round the other way and intercepts her. Passionately*). I can't say it! If I leave you to-night, I shall only come back to-morrow loving you more madly than ever. I won't leave you till you say "Yes."

(*Cynthia is going into cottage. Dick intercepts her, and gets her a little way down the stage.*)

Cynthia, we were made for one another.

CYNTHIA. Yes. I think we were. We're just on each other's level.

DICK. What do you mean?

CYNTHIA. I'm weak and vain and frivolous — I can't be faithful for five minutes. There's no truth in me. Do you love me?

DICK. Yes.

CYNTHIA. I hate and despise myself, and I hate and despise you! Do you love me?

DICK. Yes.

CYNTHIA. I don't love you — I don't admire you — I don't respect you! Do you love me?

[*Comes down stage.*

DICK (*coming to her*). Yes, with all my heart.

CYNTHIA (*with a loud, contemptuous laugh*). Oh, you were right! We were made for one another.

[*Comes down in front.*

DICK (*following her, clasping her*). To-night?

CYNTHIA (*looks at him suddenly*). Hush! I heard something! (*Listens.*) Yes, some one's coming. Go!

DICK. Not till you say "Yes."

CYNTHIA (*listening*). There's some one coming!

DICK. Say "Yes." (*Whispers.*) You may as well say it now; you'll say it some time. Give me that rose. (*Cynthia breaks away from Dick, looks at him desperately, then dashes the rose at his feet. Dick picks it up.*) At your window — soon?

[*Cynthia watches him off.*

[*Philos enters at rose-arch, slowly, cautiously, looking round. He is worn and rather aged since the last act, with traces of hardship and suffering. Cynthia, looking off after Dick, turns and sees Philos. She stands still. He watches her with intense devotion, coming towards her. She comes down in front of seat.*

PHILOS (*coming towards her, utters a cry of satisfaction*). Ah! my dearest! (*Looks at her, full of devotion; tumbles at her feet.*) Oh! how I have longed for this moment!

[*Presses the folds of her dress to his lips.*

[*A long pause.*

CYNTHIA. You've not met Una Dell?

PHILOS. No. I've been watching for her to come back with your message. What does it matter? She could but have brought you to me — I have found the way to you alone.

CYNTHIA (*aside*). He does not know.

PHILOS. Oh, I'm starved and parched for lack of you!

I'm sick with hunger for the sight of you! Speak to me, Cynthia! speak to me!

CYNTHIA. What can I say?

PHILOS (*rises from ground*). Tell me what I know, that you have counted the moments of my absence; that every moment has been a year! Oh, I cannot say what I would! I'm in a dream! (*Rises; she turns away from him.*) Let me look at you! It is you! It is the one dear form that has been with me all the year through. You have never left me! You made that place bright and sacred to me! Oh, my heart has been breaking a hundred times, but you gave me courage, you gave me life — I shall never die while you love me!

[*The girls' voices singing the rose-song heard in the distance.*

CYNTHIA (*aside*). I cannot tell him.

PHILOS. Ah! Hark! The rose-song! All the old times come back! It's the past year that's a dream. My fear, my sufferings, my despair, are all gone! It's you, it's this moment, that are real! You are with me, my bride! Give me that kiss you promised me!

CYNTHIA (*suddenly*). Hark! I have visitors here! You have taken me by surprise — don't think me cruel or unkind — I can't yet realise that you are here. I have begged Lord Burnham not to send you back to that dreadful country.

PHILOS. You have interceded for me? Don't fear! They will not dare to touch me. The country is with me.

CYNTHIA. Una Dell has a letter for you. You are to meet Lord Burnham here at eleven to-morrow morning.

PHILOS. At eleven to-morrow!

CYNTHIA. Don't stay! I want to think. You must give me time to think — I don't know what I'm saying — you must n't stay now — good-night! (*Pointing him off.*) You'll do as I wish?

PHILOS. Your least word is enough. Good-night! (*Raises her hand to his lips.*) To-morrow!

CYNTHIA. Yes, to-morrow.

PHILOS (*comes to her beseechingly*). It is a hundred years.

CYNTHIA (*with a forced smile*). It will be soon enough! (*Aside, sadly, as he turns away.*) It will be soon enough! (*Exit Philos left.*) What have I done? what have I done?

[*Exit into cottage door at back.*

[*Rather long pause. Light seen in balcony window right. Clock in distance strikes eleven.*

[*Re-enter Philos down stage left; creeps to seat, looking at balcony window.*

PHILOS (*standing in front of seat*). She is there! (*Looking up at balcony window.*) Her room! her light! Oh, I cannot leave you! And you were with me just now! Here you stood and breathed this air! Oh, if time would stand still, and make one moment of our meeting eternal! To-morrow! to-morrow!

[*Re-enter Dick from archway, cautiously.*

[*Philos crouches in arm of seat, watching.*

DICK. All safe and quiet! I've played a waiting game, and I've won. (*Going up the steps.*) I deserve my luck!

PHILOS (*watches*). That man!

DICK (*taps at balcony*). Cynthia!

PHILOS (*aside*). Cynthia!

DICK (*tapping louder*). Cynthia! Cynthia!

CYNTHIA (*opens the window a little*). Leave me! Go!

[*Trying to shut the window.*

DICK (*trying to force his way in*). But you promised—

CYNTHIA. Not now! not now! Do you hear? Not now!

DICK. Why not?

CYNTHIA. Mr. Ingarfield has been here—

DICK. Ingarfield! He's nothing to you—

CYNTHIA. He loves me!

DICK. Poor fool!

CYNTHIA. Yes, poor fool! I want to be alone, to think.

Do you hear? Good-night! Go!

[*Shuts window in his face.*

DICK (*trying at window*). Cynthia! (*Trying window.*) Fastened! Cynthia!

[*Re-enter Palsam at archway. Goes to cottage door, left, unobserved.*

DICK (*desperately*). Do you hear? Let me in! (*Tapping, trying window; Palsam and Philos watching, unseen by each other.*) You promised! (*Forces window open, and enters.*) I will come in!

PHILOS. Oh!

PALSAM (*whispers*). Who was it? Mrs. Blake! Mrs. Blake!

[*Taps door very gently.*

[*Philos rises, goes on balcony steps, with a gesture of despair turns away, comes down left.*

[*Palsam goes to door of Mrs. Campion-Blake's cottage, taps, sees Ingarfield coming from balcony.*

PHILOS (*looks up to balcony*). Poor fool!

[*Exit down stage left.*

[*Palsam comes down stage, looking after Ingarfield, and in a surprised tone exclaims:*

PALSAM. Mr. Ingarfield!

[*Exit after Ingarfield.*

DICK (*re-enters upon balcony*). Damn that fellow Ingarfield!

[*Cynthia appears at door of cottage at back, looks round cautiously to see that all is safe, then flies over to Mrs. Campion-Blake's door, batters at it with all her might for some seconds.*

CYNTHIA (*hysterically*). Let me in! let me in! I'm frightened! I — oh! let me in! Quick! quick! Ah!

[*The door opens; Cynthia, fainting, hysterical, tumbles in; the door closes.*

CURTAIN

(*One night passes between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE. *Morning room in the Rose Cottage.*
Enter Mrs. Campion-Blake from door at back.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*speaking as she enters*). Hush, sir! hush! (*Palsam enters.*) You don't wish all the servants to hear, I suppose?

PALSAM (*stern, self-important, very business-like, goes to seat and sits down; Mrs. Campion-Blake follows him down*). Why not? It 's the truth!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. It 's not the truth!

PALSAM. Mr. Ingarfield did not deny it. Mrs. Greenslade does not deny it.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. She 's too indignant!

PALSAM (*shakes his head, smiles malignantly*). I know the signs of guilt! I've had too much experience!

[*Dick enters.*

DICK. What 's the matter?

PALSAM. Sir, a very terrible scandal has occurred, which I shall be compelled to make public.

DICK. You don't say so?

PALSAM. Yes. Last night, after endeavouring for nearly an hour to get at the truth from Miss Pattison about the rose-farmers, I was obliged to leave; and happening to cross the lawn outside—

DICK (*rather alarmed*). You came by here?

PALSAM. I did.

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake is pacing backwards and forwards in a distressed way.*

DICK (*half puzzled, half alarmed*). What did you see?

PALSAM. Enough to convince me that the man who has placed himself at our head for the reformation of London is a character of the worst possible type.

DICK (*astonished*). My father?

PALSAM. No; I do not accuse your father at present. I mean Mr. Ingarfield.

DICK (*puzzled*). Ingarfield!

PALSAM. A hypocrite and a scoundrel! I saw him entering a window of this house last night at an hour when everybody ought to have been asleep.

DICK. You surprise me; but— (*Puzzled.*) The rascal! the villain!

PALSAM. I shall expose him! I shall expose the lady too!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Indeed you shall not! Mrs. Greenslade was not—

DICK (*at the mention of Mrs. Greenslade's name, quickly*). Mrs. Greenslade's name must not be mentioned in this affair.

PALSAM. Oh yes, it must!

DICK (*standing over Palsam, in a low, firm tone*). There will be a horsewhipping for the man who does mention it!

PALSAM (*in a quiet, determined voice*). I shall not be deterred by a horsewhipping. I have set myself the inexpressibly painful task of rooting out vice from English life, and it 's my duty to make an example of every one whom I detect.

DICK (*indignantly*). But good Heavens, sir! (*Seizes him.*) You shall not leave this room till you have promised me—

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*coming between them*). Hush! Leave him alone! Do you hear? (*Separates them.*) You won't stop his mouth that way.

PALSAM. No, nor any other way. Having warned Mrs. Greenslade, I now consider myself at liberty to make the matter public. Good-morning!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*stopping him*). Listen, Mr. Palsam. If I could prove you are mistaken—

PALSAM. How?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Will you promise not to mention this for an hour?

PALSAM (*takes out his watch*). It is now half-past ten. I will not mention it till half-past eleven.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I'm sure, when I've made enquiries, I can bring you the clearest proof of that lady's innocence.

PALSAM (*smiling*). Of course I should be only too pleased to find her innocent, if I could find one or more persons equally guilty. But I'm not at all hopeful. I have now another painful duty to perform.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. What's that?

PALSAM. To obtain the whole truth from Miss Pattison about the rose-farmers. (*Authoritatively, didactically.*) Mind you, this all comes from not leaving matters in my hands. If I were allowed to do as I pleased, I could reform London in six months. (*Firmly.*) At half-past eleven!

[*Exit Palsam.*

[*Dick and Mrs. Campion-Blake watch him off, then look at each other.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*angrily*). You see what you've done?

DICK (*pretending innocence*). What I've done?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Don't pretend innocence! Mrs. Greenslade has told me all!

DICK. But Palsam saw Ingarfield!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Nonsense! Palsam is short-sighted, and has somehow mistaken you for him. Oh, I knew there would be some scandal! And—

[*Suddenly stops, cries out, horror stricken.*

DICK. What's the matter now?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The duchess gives a garden party next Friday, to meet the committee of the London Reformation League? And everybody is to be there!

[*Transfixed with horror.*

DICK (*quietly*). By Jove! Everybody *will* be there!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*enraged*). Something must be done! Do you hear?

DICK. Well, I'll horsewhip Palsam! It's my duty as a man of honour, and I'll do it!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. That's no use! It would only spread the scandal far and wide. (*Pacing desperately.*) Think! think! What can we do?

DICK. Why not tell the truth?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The truth? That you were seen outside her balcony last night!

DICK. No, not me! Ingarfield!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. You or Ingarfield! That does n't matter! It's Mrs. Greenslade's reputation I must and will save at all costs. So far as Ingarfield is concerned, the story would do very well. (*Suddenly.*) It would rid us of him. Very well: Mr. Palsam saw Mr. Ingarfield — but it was outside Mrs. Greenslade's balcony — how do you account for that?

DICK. I can't. It looks suspicious!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*enraged*). Suspicious! Will you once for all realise the fearful mess we're in? Won't you do something to repair the mischief you've caused?

DICK. That I've caused! Let me tell you, Mrs. Blake, I've been used very badly in this matter. If Mrs. Greenslade had placed her reputation in my keeping, everything would have been right. Still, I'll do all I can; and if you'll say what story you're going to tell, I'll stick to it. Only let's be careful about details.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. But what story can we tell?

DICK. Well, I'm not a good hand at inventing; but you may rely on me for any amount of backing up.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. How can we clear Mrs. Greenslade?

DICK. But she's really innocent!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I know.

DICK. Why not prove it?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. How can I? Palsam will say one

thing, I shall say another, and between us Mrs. Greenslade's reputation will be torn to rags. Oh! why don't you suggest something? Think! think! think!

[*Enter Victorine.*

VICTORINE. Pardon, madame! Madame will know if Mr. Palsam is still here?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. No, he has gone; but he will come back at half-past eleven. How is Mrs. Greenslade, Victorine?

VICTORINE. Madame is not well. She has had some frightens — bad messages. I do not like that Mr. Palsam. Every time he sees me he make his eyes stop still at me — he not say nothing, but he think much — he think, "Oh, you are a wicked French devil!"

[*Pause.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*looks at Victorine. Suddenly her face brightens and shows that she sees a way out of her difficulty. She goes very sweetly to Victorine, and says in a quiet, persuasive tone*). Victorine, I want to speak to you for a few minutes quite alone.

VICTORINE. Certainly, madame.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*same gentle, sweet, persuasive manner*). Now keep somewhere close here, and I'll come to you directly.

VICTORINE. Yes, madame.

[*Exit Victorine. Leaves door open.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*to Dick*). You stay somewhere about the lawn. Be ready to come in and confirm my story if necessary.

DICK. Had n't we better arrange the details?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*looks off at open door*). Here 's Mrs. Greenslade! Leave all to me!

[*Exit Dick. Cynthia enters.*

CYNTHIA. Has Mr. Palsam gone?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Yes; but he 's coming back. He 's determined to expose you.

CYNTHIA. What can I do?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Will you trust everything to me; I believe I can save you.

CYNTHIA. Am I worth saving?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Do you realise the awful position you're in?

CYNTHIA. Yes. Mr. Palsam means to spread a horrible tale about me. Of course, I don't wish to be spattered with mud. I don't want people to think badly of me, and yet if they knew the exact truth—

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. There's no such thing as the exact truth. What we've got to do is to stop that man's tongue. I think you ought to be very grateful to me, when I'm ready to go anywhere, do anything, say anything and all for your sake.

CYNTHIA. Oh, don't think me ungrateful! Only since last night I've felt myself such a hypocrite!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Hypocrite?

CYNTHIA. Yes; and I hate hypocrites!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. So do I. No one hates hypocrisy more than I do. But how are you a hypocrite?

CYNTHIA. I keep on saying one thing and practising another.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. That isn't hypocrisy. Everybody does that. Hypocrisy is when you know you're thoroughly bad at heart, and cloak it over by pretending to be very religious — like Chadband or Stiggins. There's really very little hypocrisy in England to-day, except in the small dissenting sects. But come! we've only half an hour. Will you leave everything to me?

CYNTHIA. Shall you have to say anything that's not the truth?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I shall only deviate very slightly. And surely, to save such a reputation as yours, it's worth sacrificing something!

CYNTHIA. Then the better the reputation, the more falsehoods it's worth while to tell to save it?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Really, Cynthia, you are the most exasperating woman — when I'm doing all I can!

CYNTHIA (*running to her quickly*). No, no! I don't mean to be unkind. (*Kisses her.*) There! I'll leave it all in your hands.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Very well! I may have to spend a few hundreds —

CYNTHIA. Whatever is necessary.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Now go and lie down, and have a headache all day; and be very indignant at Mr. Palsam's accusation.

CYNTHIA. Oh, that's my part, is it? What a farce it is!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. What's a farce?

CYNTHIA. Life!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. A farce?

CYNTHIA. Yes; just to keep the husk of reputation, and know there's no grain there! And that man Ingarfield last night was not afraid of prison, or hunger, or death! And I'm afraid of the truth! I'm afraid of what people will say of me! Oh, I am small! I am contemptible!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*goes to her*). Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Very well! Do as you please! I'll say nothing!

[*Exit.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Was there ever such an unselfish, devoted friend as I am?

[*Exit. Dick and Lord Burnham enter at window left.*

LORD BURNHAM. You here! You've not kept your promise!

DICK. Well, the fact is, there's some scandal here —

LORD BURNHAM (*quickly*). Scandal! Not about you?

DICK. Oh, no! It's about this fellow Ingarfield. I don't quite know the details; but there's going to be a devil of a row!

LORD BURNHAM. Is there? He was to meet me here at eleven. (*Sits, takes out his watch.*) The papers this morning are full of these confounded mass meetings!

DICK. What's the latest about Costa Rica?

LORD BURNHAM. We shall have to pay for the revolution. We're in to the tune of four millions; only as it was all part of this confounded London Reformation scheme of Ingarfield's, it's only fair that Greenslade's million and a half should go towards it.

DICK. And the other two millions and a half?

LORD BURNHAM (*pulling a long face*). Twopence on the income tax.

DICK. And the "ne'er-do-wells"?

LORD BURNHAM. Bring them back to London.

DICK. And the Government?

LORD BURNHAM. Out we go! The ungrateful rascals! Take them threepence off the income tax, they don't say "Thank you." Put a penny on and they kick you out.

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake enters, right, evidently in very good spirits.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Ah! Good morning, Lord Burnham! (*Shaking hands.*) Who would have supposed this about Mr. Ingarfield?

[*Dick listens carefully.*

LORD BURNHAM. What?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. It seems he's quite a Lothario, a Don Juan!

LORD BURNHAM. Nonsense!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Fact! And who do you think is one of his latest victims? (*Looks round at Dick; exchanges a glance of intelligence.*) Mrs. Greenslade's French maid, Victorine!

LORD BURNHAM (*very much astonished*). You don't say so?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Yes; the girl doesn't deny it; in fact she's just made a full confession to me.

[*Lord Burnham looks from one to the other incredulously.*

DICK. Oh, there's no doubt about it — unfortunately!

LORD BURNHAM. But we're all on his committee for reforming London — and I'm the President!

[*Begins to laugh, sees the joke of it more and more, looks from one to the other.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. It's no laughing matter, Lord Burnham! Unfortunately, Mr. Palsam has discovered everything.

LORD BURNHAM. Palsam has discovered — (*Roars with laughter.*) Palsam has discovered — (*Another roar.*) By Jove! there will be a devil of a row!

DICK (*venturing, looking to Mrs. Campion-Blake for approval as he goes along*). Yes. Palsam happened to be passing outside at the very moment, and saw Romeo Ingarfield scaling Juliet Victorine's balcony.

LORD BURNHAM (*exploding with laughter*). Romeo Ingarfield — Juliet Victorine — (*Another roar of laughter; recovers himself, pulls himself together very solemnly, then moralises in a severe vein.*) Now, all this arises from the folly and nonsense of trying to reform London.

DICK (*cordially*). That's just what I said all along. London don't want any reforming. (*Suddenly starts up, very excited, very elated; rises, and comes to Lord Burnham.*) By Jove!

LORD BURNHAM. What is it?

DICK. The indignation meetings against the Government! Ingarfield's political friends! They'll cut him dead! It doesn't matter how many revolutions he causes, they'll stick to him like leeches; but they'll drop him like a hot potato if he's been within fifty miles of a French maid!

LORD BURNHAM. To be sure! Very lucky for us! Well, there's some good, after all, in Palsam's system of suspecting everybody, for he's discovered a thorough-

going hypocrite at last! Bravo, Palsam!

[*Exit at window. Figg enters breathlessly at back.*

FIGG. Mrs. Blake, has Jawle been in to breakfast?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. No; why?

FIGG. Then the great deed is done! Jawle has set the seal on his philosophy in the large pond at the end of the grounds!

DICK. He can't have been such a fool!

FIGG. Fool! It was the only solution of the life-problem that continually pressed upon him.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Do you really mean that he has drowned himself?

FIGG (*coming funereally down*). I have traced his footsteps to the pond. The extraordinary size and shape of his boots render their indentations in the mud quite unmistakable. If we could fathom the depths under the trees, I have no doubt we should there discover what, only a few hours ago, was Jawle!

[*Sits sad and dejected on sofa, looks unutterably sad.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*going to Figg very angrily*). If anything has really happened, you are quite as guilty as he is!

FIGG. There is no question of guilt! Jawle's great tragic contempt of human life must not be confounded with a paltry, every-day, newspaper suicide. (*With a smile of benevolent pity. Mrs. Campion-Blake makes a movement. Figg silences her with a gesture.*) Jawle has quitted this despicable sphere in a manner worthy of himself. There is a natural fitness about it! A kind of a — celebration.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*pacing up and down*). Nonsense! nonsense! There's no natural fitness in celebrating your coroner's inquest in a friend's house, where you are only on the merest visiting terms.

FIGG. Pardon me — you quite mistake the situation! (*Mrs. Campion-Blake makes an angry, impatient gesture, goes and throws herself in a chair, sits there show-*

ing signs of impatience at Figg's harangue. Figg rises.)

Our feelings of personal sorrow must be stifled in the contemplation of a great national event. In fact, I shall insist on making it a great national event. I shall myself pronounce the funeral oration. The ordinary method of interment would be distasteful to Jawle. (*Jawle enters at window. Waddles down to sofa behind Figg.*) I shall cremate him!

(*Catches sight of Jawle. His features drop their expression of smug, complacent, affected solemnity, and he endeavours to express surprised pleasure, but can hardly conceal his disappointment. Stands nonplussed for some moments, then ejaculates a feeble "Oh!" Pauses, stares at Jawle in a sickly, embarrassed way.*) I was really afraid that you had decided — to — a — a — a —

JAWLE (*majestically*). No; not at present!

[*Goes to armchair and sits.*

FIGG. I'm so glad — so very glad!

JAWLE. No. I happened to fall in with that hitherto terribly misguided young man, Mr. Ingarfield —

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Mr. Ingarfield!

JAWLE. Yes; to my surprise, he has embraced my doctrine of the absolute folly and depravity of the human herd. And my satisfaction in securing such a disciple has induced me to postpone my intention of drawing the curtain over this scene of misery and littleness.

[*Places his hands on his stomach, and goes into a profound reverie.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*coming to Figg*). Mr. Figg, Mrs. Greenslade is so dreadfully ill this morning, will you kindly excuse her entertaining you any longer? Under the circumstances, you won't mind —

[*Shaking hands with Figg.*

FIGG. Not at all! So sorry she is ill! We'll renew our visit on the first occasion.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Delighted — so sweet of you to come back — but you'll please get Mr. Jawle to set the seal on his philosophy in somebody's else's pond, not in ours. (*Very winningly.*) So pleased to have seen you — so very pleased! (*Shaking hands.*) Good-bye! (*Goes to Jawle.*) Good-bye, Mr. Jawle!

(*Jawle is completely absorbed; takes no notice, his large, blank face blandly gazing into nothingness. Suddenly he gives vent to his peculiar melancholy chuckle.*)

(*In a louder tone.*) Good-bye! (*Goes and rings bell.*) Good-bye! good-bye!

[*Jawle takes no notice. Figg looks at Jawle with great admiration.*

FIGG (*to Dick admiringly, pointing to Jawle*). That curious habit of burying himself.

DICK. Make haste and cremate him! That will cure him!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*having rung bell, returns to Jawle, stands over him; very emphatically*). Good-bye, Mr. Jawle!

JAWLE (*comes to himself with an effort, looks round, rouses himself, rises, places his fat paw in Mrs. Campion-Blake's hand*). Ah!

[*Stands absorbed.*

[*Worrell enters at door at back.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I trust there is no immediate danger of — of — your —

JAWLE. No; I shall school myself to endure the vast spectacle of human imbecility, selfishness, and emptiness for some short time longer. The word "emptiness" reminds me I have had no breakfast.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*takes his hand, and gradually gets him up stage. To Worrell*). Some breakfast for Mr. Figg and Mr. Jawle.

[*Gets Jawle and Figg up towards the door.*

JAWLE (*turning round plaintively*). That cold veal pie

I had for breakfast yesterday morning was singularly ill adapted to one whose digestive and other vital processes are as slow as mine.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*getting Jawle and Figg a little nearer door*). Some fish, Worrell!

JAWLE (*meditatively*). Yes; and would you think me rude if I suggested a little of that really excellent Chambertin? I have noticed it disposes me to form a slightly more favourable estimate of mundane conditions.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*getting them a little nearer door*). Some of the best Burgundy, Worrell!

[*Worrell stands at back, waiting for Jawle, holding the door open.*

JAWLE (*placing his fat hand in Mrs. Campion-Blake's*). Pray, thank Mrs. Greenslade for her kind hospitality. I trust I have amply repaid it by showing her the pernicious folly of her scheme for reforming London, and I—

[*Goes into a profound reverie. Mrs. Campion-Blake looks despairingly at Figg; motions him to take Jawle off.*

FIGG (*prompting Jawle*). Breakfast!

JAWLE (*rousing himself*). Ah!

[*Smiles seraphically. Goes off at back, uttering his peculiar melancholy chuckle. Figg follows him. Mrs. Campion-Blake gives a sigh of relief.*

DICK. Your version seems to be getting on splendidly. Can't you let me have a few more details?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Victorine has consented to get us out of our difficulty.

DICK. And Ingarfield?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Ingarfield must help us too! He surely can't refuse to join us in clearing Mrs. Greenslade's reputation!

[*Enter Worrell at back, announcing.*

WORRELL. Mr. Ingarfield!

[*Enter Philos at back, worn, calm, pale, broken, contemptuous, indifferent.*

[*Exit Worrell at back.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*hurriedly to Philos*). One moment, Mr. Ingarfield! (*Draws him down stage.*) You were here last night; you have compromised a lady — Mr. Palsam is determined to ruin her reputation. Victorine has promised to take the whole matter upon herself. To save that lady, will you aid in this deceptlon?

PHILOS (*looks at her; turns and looks at Dick, who turns round. A pause*). Yes!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*shows satisfaction*). You'll say nothing till I've cleared Mrs. Greenslade?

PHILOS. Nothing!

[*Exit Mrs. Campion-Blake. Enter Lord Burnham. Comes down.*

PHILOS. You sent for me. I'm here. What do you want?

LORD BURNHAM. I wish to tell you that we have arranged with the Costa Rica government to compound their claims, and they agree to release you from the consequences of your folly.

PHILOS. *My* folly. Their oppression drove the men mad! Go on!

LORD BURNHAM. That arrangement was concluded by cable last night, I am sorry to say.

PHILOS (*indifferently*). Sorry!

LORD BURNHAM. If this scandal about you had leaked out first, we could have snapped our fingers at your political friends, and sent you back to Costa Rica to stand your trial.

PHILOS. Send me back. (*Calmly.*) I did not escape for my own sake, but only that the truth might be known, and the innocent saved from suffering with the guilty. Send me back! Anything further?

LORD BURNHAM. You agree to place yourself entirely in our hands?

PHILOS (*indifferently*). In yours — or anybody's.

LORD BURNHAM. I have now to get Mrs. Greenslade's consent. And I trust this will be a lesson to you not to meddle again with the working arrangement of this very excellent planet.

PHILOS (*looks at him steadily, pauses; then in the same calm, indifferent tone*). No; as the devil seems to manage it very well, I'll leave it in his hands for the future.

[*Lord Burnham shrugs his shoulders, and exit. Palsam enters at window.*

PALSAM. Mr. Ingarfield, I have prepared a written statement of last night's unfortunate affair.

PHILOS (*calm, conversational tone*). Are there plenty of lies in it?

PALSAM. Lies?

PHILOS. When one lives in a world of *lies*, *lies* are the only truth, and the man who tells the truth is simply a fish who has been fool enough to jump out of water.

[*Goes up back, stands with back to audience during the following scene.*

[*Mrs. Campion-Blake re-enters with a rather large envelope. Palsam comes down stage.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*going towards Palsam cordially*). Ah! I told you that I should be able to get at the truth!

PALSAM (*suspiciously*). The truth?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Read that!

[*Gives him the envelope, watches him closely.*

PALSAM (*pulling out paper from envelope*). I warn you I am not to be imposed upon by any trumped-up tale! (*Looks suspiciously at her, then at Dick, then at Ingarfield. Opens the paper with apparent suspicion; begins to read it very carefully and suspiciously. Suddenly drops his suspicious manners.*) Ah! I read that French maid's character the moment I set eyes on her!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*sympathisingly sighs*). Ah! I 'm afraid you were right!

PALSAM. Yes; I have quite a remarkable gift of judging people's character. Of all the thousands of people whom I 've suspected, I 've never found myself at fault! There's always been something in it!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*sighs*). Ah! (*Sympathisingly.*) I should n't wonder!

PALSAM (*having considered letter*). I should like to put a few plain questions to this young person.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*quickly*). She is perfectly ready to sign that confession in your presence; but she refuses to be questioned further.

PALSAM. Ah! They can none of them bear to be cross-questioned.

[*Returns to letter carefully.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*watching him closely*). Of course you will apologize to the lady whom you have wronged with your unjust suspicions?

PALSAM (*cordially*). Oh, yes; I 'll apologize most heartily! I must say it gives me unspeakable pleasure to find that we may ascribe the whole of this painful affair to the low standard of morality prevailing among the French. What is to become of this young person?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. She leaves for France to-night.

PALSAM. Would n't it be advisable to keep her here, and thoroughly reform her first, and *then* send her back to reclaim her countrymen? What a glorious thing it would be if we could be the instruments of reforming the French nation! We must think that over! (*Turns half round to Ingarfield.*) Mr. Ingarfield, what have you to say to this confession?

PHILOS (*back to audience; does not turn round*). Nothing!

PALSAM. Of course, you will have no further association with us?

PHILOS (*same attitude*). God forbid!

PALSAM. This young person will sign this in my presence.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*rising, going towards door*). Yes — this way. (*Opens door; aside.*) It's wonderful how little I've had to deviate from the truth!

[*Exit.*

PALSAM. I'm so glad that we can still pride ourselves upon preserving our superior tone of national morality!

[*Exit.*

DICK (*to Philos*). My friend, you take the advice of a man of the world: don't you try any more of this mending and tinkering society. You see where it lands you! It's no good trying to live up to it — you can't — and then you only find out what a fool you've been to pretend to be better and wiser than other people. (*Philos looks straight at him.*) Now, you take a leaf out of my book. I enjoy life! I take the world as I find it, and a damned good sort of a world it is! And if it's good enough for me, why isn't it good enough for you, eh?

PHILOS. A hen-roost is good enough for fleas, and a dead dog for blow-flies; but this world is not good enough for me, because it holds men like you!

DICK. What the devil do you mean?

PHILOS (*comes quickly down from window and stands face to face with Dick*). I've saved her — my character's gone! I'm the laughing-stock of the country — that's nothing! Now about the future?

DICK. Future? Whose future?

PHILOS. Her future; and (*comes close to him*), damn you, your future, if it has to do with hers!

DICK (*pauses, looks at Philos, speaks in a calm voice*). What do you know?

PHILOS. I saw you enter her window last night!

DICK. You saw me?

PHILOS. And heard you and her speak of a poor fool who loved her! Well, you see what this poor fool is ready to do for her!

DICK. Yes.

PHILOS. Now — either you love her or you do not. Her reputation is safe. If you don't love her well enough to brave all fortunes with her, so that she may be secure whatever happens, take your oath to leave her this hour, and never see her again — and if you break that oath, by God! I'll kill you! If you *do* love her, and she loves you, do for her a hundredth part of what I'd do: make your love your religion, put all these lies behind your back, own her openly before all the world, and let them rave their tongues out! You've dared to do wrong; dare not to lie about it! Which is it to be?

DICK (*after a long pause, very calmly, in ordinary tone*). Mr. Ingarfield, perhaps you won't believe me. Frankly I should tell you this if it were not true; so take your choice: Mrs. Greenslade is innocent.

PHILOS. Innocent?

DICK. She saw you, spoke to you last night! That saved her! Do you believe me?

PHILOS (*looks at him very searchingly for a few seconds*). Yes. (*Turns very imperatively.*) Then you'll leave her?

DICK. Yes; this morning. And you'll allow me to put Mr. Palsam right about —

PHILOS. It's too late for that. He believes this tale; if you change it, you 'll rouse his suspicions, and perhaps she will be sacrificed.

DICK. But your character?

PHILOS. My life is ended. I care no more for life or reputation than if I were dead.

DICK. But it's monstrous — as a man of honour, I really cannot —

PHILOS (*interrupting him on the word honour*). As a man of honour — let me be!

[*Dick goes to table at back, gets his hat, comes down, and is about to speak to Philos, but is overcome; walks to window.*

DICK (*ashamed*). I've behaved like a blackguard!

[*Exit Dick.*

PHILOS (*seated on sofa alone*). All's over! What am I waiting for? Still hungering for her footfall or her least whisper!

[*Enter Worrell at back, showing in Una, who brings a spray of blighted roses, and walks down stage to Philos.*

WORRELL. Mrs. Greenslade is engaged, but I'll tell her you're here.

[*Exit at back.*

UNA (*seeing Philos; looking at him*). You know! She has told you! Ah! I knew I should find you here!

PHILOS. I'm waiting to see Lord Burnham — That's a lie! I'm waiting because I can't drag myself away from her.

UNA (*coming to him*). Where have you been through the night?

PHILOS. I don't know — anywhere! Oh, Una!

[*Looks up to her for sympathy.*

UNA (*softly*). What is it? (*Philos bursts into tears.*) What is it? Tell me! Come, tell me all!

PHILOS (*between his sobs*). This thing — this dream — this sweetness — this *woman* that I loved — oh, but I love her still! — she's the spring of every pulse of me that beats — she plays with my heart as the moon plays with the tides, and rolls me round the earth at her will — Oh, I loved her! I loved her! And I love her still! I'm hers! I'm hers! No! no! I will not be such a slave! I will forget her — I'll — I'll —

[*Buries his face in his hands, sobbing.*

UNA (*standing over him, stretching her arms towards him, aside*). Won't my love do for you? (*Conquers herself; speaks to him again, like a mother to a child.*) There! there! Cry away! Shall I cry with you? Listen! I've been longing for the moon for years, and breaking my heart because I can't get it; and the moon

takes no notice of me! Do you hear? Am I not a baby, to long for the moon? There! there! there! Cry, child, cry, and ease your heart!

PHILOS (*partially recovering, looking at her through his tears*). Oh, I'm weak, I'm cowardly!

UNA. Ah, but you'll be strong by and bye! You'll be master of yourself as you have never been before, and you'll set your face like flint to your work! And then you won't mind losing your parsley garland!

PHILOS. My parsley garland!

UNA. Yes, we're all of us racing for parsley garlands on this silly earth. What does it matter whether we win or lose? It's only a few parsley leaves. The prize is nothing! The race is all! Ah! (*Laughing at him.*) You're better! A heartache isn't much more than a toothache, is it? Will you come and race for another parsley garland? Will you make London fit to live in? (*Showing him the roses.*) Look!

PHILOS. Blighted!

UNA. Yes; the head gardener says it's no use trying to grow roses here. The London smoke kills them.

PHILOS. That's what I've been trying to do. I've been trying to grow roses in the London smoke.

[*Una goes up stage. Lord Burnham enters.*

LORD BURNHAM (*coming towards sofa*). Mr. Ingarfield, Mrs. Greenslade consents that the Greenslade bequest be applied to the claims of the Costa Rica government.

PHILOS. Very well.

LORD BURNHAM. So the net result of our reforming London is a revolution in South America, and twopence on the income tax.

[*Enter Mrs. Campion-Blake and Palsam.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Now you're quite satisfied?

PALSAM (*amiably*). Oh, quite! Send for Mrs. Greenslade, and let me make an ample apology!

[*Worrell enters at back with large parcel.*

WORRELL (*coming to Mrs. Campion-Blake with the par-*

cel). A parcel for you, madam, by special messenger.

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. The new programme! Let the messenger wait. (*Opening parcel.*) And tell Mrs. Greenslade that Mr. Palsam wishes to see her here.

[*Exit Worrell.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*opens the parcel, and brings out the new programme, a gorgeous blue satin affair, with gold letters. Displaying it*). Isn't it perfectly exquisite?

LORD BURNHAM. Very pretty pattern.

UNA. What's it for?

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. It's the new programme for reforming London.

UNA. Oh, I see; you're going to cover London with blue satin, so that Londoners may get an idea of what the sky is like!

[*Exit at window.*

[*Cynthia enters very slowly. Philos turns round; their eyes meet; she shows great shame; her eyes drop.*

CYNTHIA. You asked to see me, Mr. Palsam?

PALSAM. I'm very proud to acknowledge that I was entirely mistaken. I have discovered the real offender. Mr. Ingarfield (*Dick enters at window*), you will acknowledge your hypocrisy in the fullest terms?

CYNTHIA. What?

[*Looks enquiringly at Mrs. Campion-Blake. Philos looks at Dick.*

PALSAM. I shall exact from you, sir, a public confession in the same terms as this.

[*Showing letter.*

CYNTHIA. Confession? Give that to me! (*Looks at Mrs. Campion-Blake enquiringly. To Mrs. Blake.*) What have you done?

[*Philos and Dick look at each other. Cynthia reads the letter, shows great indignation.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. My dear — of course — you had no idea — it's surprised you!

CYNTHIA (*having read letter with the deepest shame and indignation*). Oh!

[*Tears it up in great anger.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Take care! What are you doing? You've ruined yourself!

CYNTHIA. No; I think I've saved myself!

PALSAM. Why did you tear that confession?

CYNTHIA. Because it's false!

PALSAM. False! Then what am I to believe?

CYNTHIA. Believe what you please!

PALSAM. If I thought you were guilty—

CYNTHIA. If you thought I was guilty, you would blacken me! Spy! spy! spy! Blacken me, then! Lord Burnham, I am innocent! Defend me against this man!

[*Looks up, meets Philos's eyes, covers her face with her hands, bows her head, utters a cry of greatest shame, rushes off in an agony of shame.*

[*Pause. Philos goes to door after her; stands there watching.*

LORD BURNHAM. You hear, sir! You're evidently mistaken; and if this tale is made public, all that is certain to be proved is that you have tried to ruin a lady's reputation. You'll gain nothing by making a scandal. You'll be best to hold your tongue.

PALSAM (*after a pause*). I'll keep silence on one condition.

LORD BURNHAM. Well?

PALSAM. My lord, you are addicted to horse-racing. I'll never mention this painful affair if you'll promise to sell your horses, and promise never—

LORD BURNHAM (*with a contemptuous laugh, turns away*). No; I'm damned if I do!

PALSAM. Then I'm very sorry I shall be compelled to make it public.

DICK. Make what public?

PALSAM. What I saw last night.

DICK. What did you see?

PALSAM. I saw Mr. Ingarfield at that balcony.

DICK (*aside to Philos*). Why don't you speak?

PHILOS (*looks at Dick and Palsam*). I've nothing to say.

[*Goes to back.*

DICK. It's false! Mr. Palsam, you saw me!

PALSAM. You?

LORD BURNHAM. Dick!

DICK. My honour, sir, Mrs. Greenslade is innocent—save her, sir!

[*Very appealingly to Lord Burnham.*

[*Pause. Lord Burnham, perplexed, walks up towards Mrs. Campion-Blake, who has been listening to foregoing scene.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*to him*). She'd much better have kept to the truth as I had arranged it!

LORD BURNHAM (*to Palsam*). You'll hold your tongue if I sell my stud and give up racing?

PALSAM. Yes.

LORD BURNHAM. Very well; I'll do it! (*Coming a step or two towards Dick. Dick takes Lord Burnham's hand, wrings it heartily, exchanges a look with Philos, and goes off at window.*) And if I ever hear one word against this lady—

PALSAM. Oh, you won't! I've given you my word, and I always speak the truth.

LORD BURNHAM. And let me tell you, sir, you've acted the part of a busy-body, mischief-maker, and scandal-monger, and the sooner you leave this house the better.

[*Drives the words home into Palsam, and then goes calmly and sits on sofa.*

[*Pause. Palsam stands imperturbable in the middle of stage.*

PALSAM. My lord, there's one thing more before we part.

LORD BURNHAM (*angrily*). Well?

PALSAM. You have never shown any real interest in the reformation of London. (*Lord Burnham shows great impatience.*) There is to be a great temperance fête

at the Crystal Palace next month. Now, you have a cellar of very expensive wines. It would be a noble and graceful action on your part if you would consent to preside at the Crystal Palace, and publicly pour away all your expensive wines into the gutter — [*Lord Burnham rises enraged; goes up to Palsam with a threatening gesture. Palsam remains quite calm. Lord Burnham makes an effort to speak, looks at Palsam, finally comes away and drops on to sofa.*

LORD BURNHAM (*helplessly, in a low voice*). Will somebody take it away!

PALSAM. I'm going, my lord. (*Leans over back of sofa, and speaks in Lord Burnham's face.*) I'll call to-morrow at your town house for your decision about the Crystal Palace. Good-morning!

[*Exit at window.*

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. Lord Burnham! (*Lord Burnham looks up.*) I don't blame you; but I never knew anything so mismanaged as this reformation of London! I've been connected with bazaars and charities of all sorts, and I've always made them most successful! And I'm quite sure I could have made this reformation of London a gigantic success!

LORD BURNHAM. Then take it, my dear lady, take it, and make it a gigantic success! I don't want to reform London!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE (*growing more indignant; rings bell*). And it's sure to get into the papers — and after all I've done! However, I wash my hands of the whole affair!

LORD BURNHAM. So do I! so do I!

MRS. CAMPION-BLAKE. I never was so annoyed in my life —

(*Worrell enters.*)

(*With great dignity.*) Tell Mrs. Greenslade I leave for town by the next train. (*Going up stage, turns.*) Tell Mrs. Greenslade that the Duchess of Launceston

and Mrs. Campion-Blake resign their places on the committee!

[*Exit Worrell.*

[*Pause. Mrs. Campion-Blake stalks up to door at back, opens it, turns, stalks back to table, takes up the blue satin programme, goes back in same style. Exit with great offended dignity, carrying the blue satin programme.*

LORD BURNHAM (*regretfully*). And I was fond of a bit of racing!

(*Una enters window. Philos comes down.*)

(*Rising.*) Heigho! I'm afraid, Miss Dell, there is no way of mending society.

UNA. If everybody mended himself, Lord Burnham, society would n't want any mending.

LORD BURNHAM. Ah! but who 's going to begin? (*Meeting Philos, who is coming down.*) Mr. Ingarfield, I did you an injustice. (*Offering hand; Philos takes it.*) You must come with me to town, and we 'll get this Costa Rica affair settled.

(*Cynthia enters. Seeing Cynthia, hurries to window.*) I 'll see if my carriage is ready.

[*Goes up back, into window.*

CYNTHIA (*walking towards Philos with the deepest shame*). I can't say anything! Can you forgive me? (*Philos bows.*) You 'll forget me?

(*Philos looks at her and shakes his head. He goes from her, and throws himself on sofa. She goes to Una*). I have broken his heart! Help me to heal it! Help me to give him courage!

UNA (*comes down to Philos, tries to assume a bright, cheerful tone*). Come, comrade! though we women are false, the world must wag, and we must help it! Come! your work!

[*Laying her hand on his shoulder.*

PHILOS (*rising, bewildered, dreamy*). My work! What work?

UNA. To make London beautiful! London healthy! London clean! From north to south, from east to west, in every street, in every home!

LORD BURNHAM. What madness!

UNA. Oh, yes; it's madness! Century after century the same mad chase, the same mad dream! We hunt for what we shall never find, we dream what will never come true. We know it; but still we pursue, and still we dream! Our Dulcinea is always false, but we always think her true; we give our strength for a parsley garland; we drain Europe of its flower of manhood to buy a little sacred spot in Jerusalem; we ride shameless through Coventry; we spill our blood like water for the Stuarts; we send Paris, red with butchery, dancing after liberty, equality, fraternity; we tilt at every windmill, we dash ourselves on every pike! Oh, you are right! We are mad enough! But our madness keeps the world alive! Your sanity stagnates! Our madness breeds your ideals; and you're dead, you're dead, you're dead without ideals!

(*Exit Lord Burnham at window.*)

(*To Philos.*) Come along! Let the past alone! Begin afresh to-day! Come!

PHILOS (*rises, with face full of resolve*). I will; and I'll never look behind till my work is done! (*To Cynthia.*) Good-bye!

CYNTHIA. Good-bye!

PHILOS (*turns back, beseechingly*). Give me that kiss you promised me! (*She kisses his forehead.*) Can't you love me?

CYNTHIA. You saved me! Do with me as you please!

[*She drops at his feet.*

[*Una looks at them, then goes off hopelessly at door at back.*

CURTAIN.

THE TEMPTER

A TRAGEDY IN VERSE IN FOUR ACTS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The scene is laid in England in the fourteenth century.

ACT I

Scene 1. On board Prince Leon's vessel in the English Channel.

Scene 2. In the Courtyard of the Fleur-de-Lys Inn on the Canterbury Road.

ACT II

The Guest-House of Saint Werburg's Abbey near Canterbury.

ACT III

A Glade outside the Abbey Walls.

ACT IV

The outside of Canterbury Cathedral at night.

"The Tempter" was originally produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London.

Original Cast

The Devil	Mr. H. Beerbohm Tree
Prince Leon of Auvergne	Mr. Fred Terry
Earl of Rougemont	Mr. Holman Clark
Sir Gilbert Morbec	Mr. Fuller Mellish
Sir Gaultier de Florac	Mr. Revelle
Father Urban, Prior of St. Werburg's Abbey	Mr. Fred. Everill
Drogo Pound, Steward to the Earl of Rougemont	Mr. G. W. Anson
Host	Mr. Charles Allan
Cellarer	Mr. Cowie
Master of the Vessel	Mr. Baldie
Boatswain	Mr. Garry
First Sailor	Mr. Paton
A Singing Pilgrim	Mr. A. Wigley
A Child	
The Lady Isobel of Carmayne	Miss Julia Neilson
The Lady Avis of Rougemont	Mrs. Tree
Lettice, waiting-maid to Lady Isobel	Miss Irene Vanbrugh
Sarah Pound	Mrs. E. H. Brooke

Pilgrims, Sailors, Beggars, Gentlemen, Monks, Servingmen, Sutlers, Grooms, Waiting-women, Soldiers, Attendants, etc.

PROLOGUE

Leave for awhile the fret of modern life,
Its cheap pert aims, delirious unrest;
Leave social maladies and the lust-pest
To Nature's surgery. Trust her wise knife.
Shun city fungi with strange fevers rife;
Nor join crude modern persons in vain quest
For deathless beauty's self and holy zest
Of rapturous martyrdom in some base strife
Of feeble peddling folk, caked in dull filth.
Shut out the reek of this stockjobbing age,
Its wan-faced railway herds, its wealth, its illth,
The muddy ferment of its greed, and rage
Of blind, deaf, mad, industrial war. Close ears.
Close eyes. Waken in long past lovely years.

Waken in Chaucer's England, 'mid the ring
Of bells, 'mid rainbow throngs, and rich gay sights.
Lo! here a band of pilgrims, dames and knights,
Beset with evil's strong encompassing
In days when men had souls to save. What Thing
Is this that dogs these wayfarers, affrights,
Mocks, lures and frustrates, startles and delights,
And wins them to a wild abandoning
Of heaven, of all? Such Power dogs us to-day:
The past I show is but our present life,
And we are pilgrims, shadowed on our way,
Waging the old inexplicable strife
With darkness, taint of blood, necessity,
Fate, chance, or — what? Raise curtain. Let us see.

THE TEMPTER

ACT I

SCENE I. *On board Prince Leon's ship off the South Foreland. Night. A storm raging; very dark, thunder and lightning; sailors in the rigging lowering the sails; the sails are torn; sailors hurrying to and fro; a steersman at the rudder; the master of the ship directing with master's whistle; shouting, hurrying, alarm.*

MASTER (*shouting*). Lower her sails! Ho there! Be nimble. (*To the Steersman.*) Keep her head out to sea!

[*Enter from below Sir Gaultier de Florac, a young knight attendant on Prince Leon.*

SIR GAULTIER. How now, master?

MASTER. Keep below, Sir Gaultier.

SIR GAULTIER. The Prince would know where we are.

MASTER. 'T is more than I can tell in this pitchy blackness.

SIR GAULTIER. Is the Prince in peril?

MASTER. He's as near Heaven as the rest of us.

SIR GAULTIER. Is it so? What wilt thou do to save his life?

MASTER. The same that I shall do to save my own. Keep below, Sir Gaultier. Bid the Prince and all your company keep below.

SIR GAULTIER. Nay, we'll not stay there to be drowned like rats. Thou knowest what the Prince's life is worth, and how all the hopes of France and England hang upon this voyage! What can I do to rescue him?

MASTER. Take him on thy back and swim ashore with him.

SIR GAULTIER. Dost thou jeer at me?

MASTER. Nay, nay, Sir Gaultier, but stand out of my way. The ship's driving ashore. If we 'scape and live, we live; if we perish, we perish. Below! Below and pray; 't is all that thou canst do. We're in God's hands!

SIR GAULTIER. Nay, in the devil's hands, I think. 'T is the devil that sends such weather as this.

[*Enter the Prince from below.*

PRINCE. Gaultier, where art thou?

SIR GAULTIER. Here, my Prince.

PRINCE. How now?
Are we in jeopardy?

SIR GAULTIER. We walk a plank
'Twixt heaven and hell! Look at this boiling pit!
(*A terrific thunder clap.*)
Mercy! Are Satan's legions all broke loose?

[*Enter a Sailor from below.*

SAILOR. She's sprung a leak! Below! All hands below!

[*Exeunt all except the Prince and Sir Gaultier.*

PRINCE. Gaultier, if so it chance, that these mad seas
Drown me and let thee live—

SIR GAULTIER. If thou art drowned,
Be sure that I'll not live to tell the tale.
I'll perish too!

PRINCE. Nay, as thou art my friend,
Escape if so thou may. Do this for me;
Thou wilt?

SIR GAULTIER. I promise thee.

PRINCE. If I go down,
Bear thou this message to the Lady Avis:
Tell her that though my eyes have never looked
On her dear face since those remembered days
When she, the daintiest maid of seven, and I,
A boy of twelve, were, by our parents' will,
And our pleased, wondering, childish love, betrothed
And promised to each other, though since then
Our countries' wars have parted us, yet ever

My tenderest heartstrings have been tied to hers;
And lately, when the King of England offered,
As sign and pledge of his goodwill to France,
That our betrothal should be ratified,
And I should marry her, his god-daughter,
And bind our countries in a lasting peace,
Tell her that when her picture came to show
How sweet and fair my playmate wife had grown,
My childhood's love came rushing back, and I
Took my most solemn vow to be her knight,
Her stainless knight, pure, consecrate to her
Alone. And as God hears my words, maybe
My dying words, I've kept my vow. Here, here,
In my heart's secret shrine, her image dwells,
Maiden, inviolate!

[*Thunder, lightning. Shrieks and howls, and cries of despair from below.*

[*Enter a Soldier from below in fright.*

SOLDIER. My liege! My liege!
Please you to come below! The men grow wild
And riotous. They are beside themselves.

[*The Prince goes to hold, shouting as he goes.*

PRINCE. Ye cowards? Cease this brawl! Come, cease, I say!

[*Exit, followed by Attendant.*

SIR GAULTIER (*calls to Steersman*). Steersman!

STEERSMAN. Ay, ay!

SIR GAULTIER. Does she answer to her rudder?

STEERSMAN. I scarce know in all this uproar. Please God, I'll keep her off the land.

[*Exit Sir Gaultier below. A huge wave. The vessel reels; the Steersman is swept off. A flash of lightning reveals the Devil in the Steersman's place.*

DEVIL (*alone, steering*). Please God or not, I'll dash her on the rocks!
(*Looking after Steersman, shouting after him.*)
Thou wilt please God? About it then, thou fool!

(*Stretches forth his arm; a flash of lightning.*)
My swift, pale harbinger, skip through the heavens!
Dart, blast and havoc! Daunt these seamen's hearts!
Palsy their sinews! Dry their bloods with fright!
(*Stretches forth his arm; another flash.*)
Nearer! Awake, old thunder! Roll! Split! Crash!
Ocean, voluptuous destroyer, help!
Thou always wast a rebel! Lash and chafe!
Rage! Leap! Split thy triumphant spume to heaven!
Open thy gulfy jaws for this new herd,
This Gadarean feast that I shall send thee!
Hither, ye winds! Howl! Browbeat! Roar and baffle
These seafarers. Drown all, save one! Spare him!
(*Stretches forth his hand; lightning, thunder.*)
Louder! 'T is very good! Evil is good,
And power is good, and Death and ruin good!
Why, He pronounced Creation good, and I
Pronounce Destruction good!
(*A great cry of fright; a crowd of the Prince's Attendants rush up from below in panic, followed by the Prince and Sir Gaultier.*)
Here comes this fry!
(*The vessel reels; a cry of fright.*)
Why, how these barn-door fowl cling to their lives!
[*Shrieks, howls.*
[*The Prince and Sir Gaultier come from below.*

PRINCE. Ye knaves! What now? What ails ye? What 's to do?
(*Following the Attendants, driving them in front of him. Cries of "We drown, we perish!"*)
Well, drown, and perish, if ye must, like men.
Ye have faced death a hundred times in battle,
When wounds and agony, horror and thirst,
Waited upon him. And are ye frighted now,
When he comes tenderly as dreaming sleep?
Shame! Shame! Ye cowards! Nay, ye have served me well.

I will speak gently! Soldiers, servants, friends!
(*Murmurs of "The Prince speaks." "Hear him." "Listen," etc. The wind howls.*)
(*Raising his voice.*) As ye would bear yourselves upon the field,
So bear you now. He that doth blench or flinch
Is no liege-man of mine. Look upon me!
What one among you all has such dear cause
To live as I? Yonder the sweetest lady
In all of Christendom, waits to be made
My bride! What joy of life I ne'er shall taste
If we go down, and yet ye see me here
As calm as though I laid me down to sleep.

DEVIL. Oh, you're a man of pluck! You're a man of mettle, but wait till I get you on my grindstone.
[*Cries of "Long live the Prince!"*

PRINCE. Is any yet afeared?
[*Cries of "No," interrupted by thunder and lightning; cries of fear; the Master of the vessel rushes on in alarm.*

MASTER. My liege, she's sinking! Save yourself how you can!

SIR GAULTIER. Sinking! Then God have mercy on us!

PRINCE. Oh, Gaultier! 'tis maddening that I
Shall die, and never clasp her. If thou live
Bear thou my message, say that as I sank
(*Taking picture from his breast, kissing it*)
I held her picture to my lips, and whispered
Avis.
(*Lightning, thunder; a bolt strikes the ship and splits the mast; the ship begins to sink; cries of terror and despair.*)
Kiss me! we're sinking!
[*Hurrying, confusion; cries of "We're sinking!" "She's sinking!" "To the boat!" Sailors rush on and fall on their knees.*

SAILOR. God have mercy! Christ have mercy! God hear me!

DEVIL. He's deaf! He's not at home! He's gone upon a journey!

FIRST SAILOR (*on his knees*). God have mercy on me!

DEVIL. I'll have mercy on thee.

THIRD SAILOR. Save me to repent! Let me live! Let me live! (*Rushing frantically backwards and forwards, shrieking and squealing.*) Give me another year, another month, another hour. Save me to repent!

[*Climbs up to the Devil.*

DEVIL. Repent, rascal? Thou hast been damned these ten years past.

[*He is washed overboard with a cry; more Sailors and Attendants rush on; the ship sinks deeper; cries of despair.*

SAILOR. There's liquor in the hold.

DEVIL. Drink, ye rascals! Drown yourselves in drink. Die besotted. You'll wake sober.

(*Sailors bring on a barrel of liquor; they open it, and begin quarrelling. Above them in the aftcastle.*) Up! Up, and cut each other's throats! Let's have some mutiny! To the boats, and fight each other like wild beasts!

SAILORS. The boats! The boats!

DEVIL. That's better. Curse! Curse! Mutiny! Blaspheme!

[*The vessel reels; the moon breaks out and reveals the Devil steering, Sailors quarrelling and stabbing each other. Sailors shout and point him out. "Look! Look!" Yells of execration. The vessel lurches and they are swept off. The vessel sinks still deeper. As the vessel goes down, the Prince is seen climbing up to the Devil. The ship sinks. Cries and groans. Darkness. Cries and groans continue. A lurid dawn slowly spreads over the scene, with great leaden storm-clouds above, and along the horizon copper clouds in a pale*

green lake of light. A small boat is seen on the waters with the Prince and the Devil therein, the Devil rowing. The sea is strewn with corpses, and faintly reflects the copper sky; the mast of the sunken ship is seen above the waters. Land dimly seen in the distance, fringed with surf. Scene changes to Scene II.

SCENE II. *Courtyard of the Fleur-de-Lys Inn on the Canterbury road.*

A large archway, right, leading from the road. An archway, left. A balcony all along left side over the archway, with steps coming down. The inn door with porch at back, to the left. A large bench outside the inn at back, to the right. A stone seat down stage, left. The balcony pillars are covered with ivy, which grows on to the bright warm red roof at back. Everything very bright and sunny.

Enter Drogo Pound, steward to the Earl of Rougemont; goes to the inn door, shouts, knocks.

DROGO. Ho! ho! Here!

[*Enter Host and Serving-man from inn.*

HOST. Give you good day, sir!

DROGO. Make ready all your rooms on the instant. Here comes my lord the Earl of Rougemont, and the Lady Avis, his daughter, and the Lady Isobel of Carmayne, his niece, and Sir Gilbert Morbec, with divers other pilgrims on their way to the shrine of the blessed St. Thomas at Canterbury! (*Seats himself.*) Some wine. And, hearkee, I know good wine!

HOST (*to Serving-man*). Bid them make ready all the rooms. Bring this gentleman some of the ten-year-old. (*Exit Serving-man into inn.*) We had knowledge of the Lord Rougemont's coming. They say the Lady Avis is to be wedded to a great lord of France, and she is now on her wedding journey.

DROGO. True, and the Prince Leon of Auvergne is now

on his way across the sea to meet her at Canterbury, and wed her there.

[*Servant brings wine to Drogo.*

HOST. Heaven give them joy, and send peace between us and France!

DROGO. Amen! (*Drinks deeply.*) That's good liquor, host.

HOST. 'Tis my best.

DROGO. Hearkee, we may lodge here some days. I do not eat now nor drink, save bread and water only. (*The Host looks surprised.*) My lord and I are doing penance; we walk barefoot; we sleep but three hours a night; we wake at midnight and receive a wholesome scourging. My lord has a beggar to scourge him; my wife Sarah scourges me. We are doing a mighty penance till we purge ourselves clean of all sin at the tomb of the holy martyr. See that my wife Sarah hath plenty of this same liquor while we lodge here. What hast thou for supper?

[*Sarah has entered from archway; comes to Drogo.*

HOST. Some flesh of mutton and beef, some venison pasties, some boar's head, some chitterlings — we have abundance of good cheer.

[*Drogo has been smacking his lips, and nodding his head approvingly.*

DROGO. Put down thy belongings, Sarah, and find thy way to the buttery. Are there any beggars in your town?

HOSTS. We have a goodly multitude of Christ's poor.

DROGO (*to Serving-man*). Call hither all the beggars of the town. Tell them the Lord of Rougemont comes, and is full of blessed charity.

[*Exit Serving-man.*

HOST. What sin hath the Earl of Rougemont done that he doeth such grievous penance?

DROGO. He hath seized upon the estate of Carmayne in France, which by rights should go to his niece the

Lady Isobel. He lays claim to it under the Salic Law, and hath appealed to the Holy Father, who hath ruled that he shall keep all the earldom, and do penance for it to Holy Church.

HOST. Heaven assoyle his soul! And the Lady Isobel?

DROGO. Oh! she is to be a nun; she is nought. Prepare your worst room for my lord — 't is his penance. Put the Lady Avis in your best room. The Lady Isobel — 't is no matter where you put her, she is nought. See that my wife Sarah is comfortably lodged. My lord is resting a mile hence; I go to fetch him. See that all is made ready.

HOST. It shall straightway be done.

[*Exit into inn.*

[*Enter the Devil at left gateway, dressed as a soldier of forty-five, bluff, hearty, roystering.*

DEVIL (*calling off*). Perk up, my bantling! Your best leg forward.

[*The Prince staggers in, pale, weak, utterly exhausted; his clothes ragged, torn, muddy.*

PRINCE. I 'm dog-tired! I 'll go no further! I — I — (*Staggers*). I — oh — I shall die!

[*Drops fainting.*

DEVIL. Some day — not yet. 'T is thy live soul I want, not thy dead body. Ho, hither! Ho! ho!

[*Beating at the inn door. Host enters in a hurry.*

HOST. Why, who the devil — (*Seeing the Devil.*) Your pardon, sir! A hearty welcome to you!

DEVIL. My constant greeting!

HOST (*seeing the Prince*). Why, who is here?

DEVIL. A friend of mine.

HOST. Not dead?

DEVIL. No, he has swooned. Some of thy liquor to revive him — the ten-year-old. Get it! (*The Host moves slowly.*) Come, be alive! About it! Quick, or I shall tickle you!

(*The Host hurries into inn. The Prince gasps.*)

(*Bending over the Prince.*)
Ah! gasp and groan. You'd marry Lady Avis,
Tinker a peace between these angry kings,
Cheat me of famine, war, and pestilence.
When I stand ready to unleash my hounds
For glut and rapine of a hundred years,
You'd muzzle them, and marry Lady Avis.
I'll show thee better sport than Lady Avis;
And I'll show Isobel far better sport
Than marrying Holy Church, and I will have
A little merry sport myself, and twist
Things inside out, and upside down, and stir
A glorious hurly-burly hereabout!
(*The Host enters from inn with wine. The Devil bends over the Prince, and shouts in his ear.*)
Hillo! hillo! Wake up! Wake up! Hillo!
(*The Prince stirs a little.*)
(*To the Host.*) Open his jaws and pour it down.
(*The Host does so; the Prince drinks, revives.*)
How, now?

PRINCE. Oh, I shall die!

DEVIL. Die? Ah, to be sure you will, after a good life well spent in drinking and wenching, and all manner of wholesome ungodliness. Drink again! (*The Prince drinks.*) Some more! Come! That's brave! Now you're a man again!

PRINCE (*dazed, weak, fuddled*). How long have we been travelling together?

DEVIL. All the day long since six in the morning.

PRINCE. What's to-day?

DEVIL. Wednesday.

PRINCE. Then 'twas last night I was shipwrecked?

DEVIL. Shipwrecked? Ay, so I suppose; I happened to be abroad early this morning and found you on the seashore, flat on your belly, with your nose in the mud, like the battered figurehead of a ten-years'-drowned vessel.

PRINCE. Why have you shown me such kindness? (*Looking keenly at him.*) Who are you? Tell me, that I may reward you.

DEVIL. Virtue is its own reward. Host, prepare us some supper! See to it! My friend is ready to famish. (*The Host is going into inn. Calls.*) Host, have you seen aught of my very good friends, the Earl of Rougemont and the Lady Avis?

(*The Prince stops drinking and shows eager attention.*) And the Lady Isobel of Carmayne?

HOST. They are now coming into the town; we are making ready our best accommodation for them.

[*Exit Host into inn.*

PRINCE (*starts up*). The Lady Avis will be here to-night! (*Looks at his clothes with great shame.*) Look at me! (*Looking at his draggled attire; creeping off.*) I'll hide somewhere till they're gone on their way.

DEVIL (*stopping him*). Hearkee! You've not seen the Lady Avis since you were children?

PRINCE. No. (*The Devil looks at him, laughs, grunts.*) What's the matter?

DEVIL (*grunts disapprovingly, shakes his head*). It's no affair of mine.

PRINCE. What's no affair of yours?

DEVIL. Your marriage with Lady Avis. And yet—

PRINCE. Well, yet—

DEVIL. Don't ask me. I'm far too ready to mix myself in other people's business. Don't ask me!

PRINCE (*pursuing him*). But, sir, if you know anything, I entreat you as my friend—

DEVIL. Why do you think of marrying her?

PRINCE. We are pledged to one another, and our marriage will secure our countries' peace.

DEVIL (*grunts*). Well, marry her.

PRINCE. Why so I shall, unless—

DEVIL. Unless! Drink, man, and listen. (*The Prince drinks.*) Why, what a plague do you want war to

cease — you, a knight and soldier? And what a plague do you want to marry in the heyday of your youth and lustihood? Marry? Drown yourself! Marry? Hang yourself! Marry? Bury yourself! I've been travelling with these pilgrims! I've seen (*sniffs*) what I have seen. The Lady Avis is no match for you. But the Lady Isobel. The Lady Isobel! Oh, my lost youth!

PRINCE. But I'm betrothed to the Lady Avis.

DEVIL. Well, marry her!

PRINCE. Is she not worthy of me?

DEVIL. Judge her for yourself before you go further.

PRINCE. Judge her for myself? How can I?

DEVIL. Hum! A young squire was slain here in a drunken brawl — I did my best to keep him out of it, but he would fight, the fool — his dress is within! 'tis a rich silk velvet; put it on, and be my squire.

PRINCE. Your squire?

DEVIL. You're not expected for a day or two; you can study her and know her, yourself unknown; and when the game is out you can declare yourself.

DROGO (*his voice heard off, right*). Make way there for the mighty Earl of Rougemont, and the Lady Avis, and the Lady Isobel of Carmayne.

DEVIL. Come! (*The Prince hesitates.*) Judge her before you marry her. Come!

[*Leads the way into the inn.*

PRINCE (*hesitating, laughingly, jestingly*). So I'm to be your squire?

DEVIL. You'll find me a merry, easy master.

[*They look off; the Devil draws the Prince into the inn.*

[*Enter the Earl of Rougemont, barefooted, in sackcloth, doing penance. Enter the Lady Avis and her maid. Enter the Lady Isobel and Lettice, her maid. Enter Sir Gilbert Morbec, very attentive to the Lady Isobel, who is cold and reserved to him. Enter Sarah*

Pound. Enter some twenty other Pilgrims of different ages, ranks, and stations.

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. Is everything prepared for me as for the vilest sinner on this earth?

DROGO (*very obsequiously*). Yes, my lord.

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. Bring me the beggars.

DROGO. I go to fetch them, my lord.

[*The Pilgrims make a move to go into the inn.*

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. I pray you all wait and bear witness how I abase myself before the dregs and offscouring of the earth.

[*The Pilgrims wait.*

ISOBEL. I wonder what hath become of our delightful guide and companion to-day.

[*The Devil peeps round the balcony of the inn just above her. A black gown is thrown over his soldier's dress, giving him the appearance of a gentleman scholar; his manners are well-bred, elegant, plausible, bland, cynical, philosophical, engaging. With the Lady Isobel and Lady Avis he continues this manner; with the Prince he assumes a rougher, bluffer, more soldierly manner.*

DEVIL (*looking down on her*).

You miss me, then? You 'll find me at your side,
Or in your ear, or perched upon your instep,
Or swinging in your curls, or galloping
In your rebellious blood, whene'er you will.

[*Coming down the balcony steps to them.*

AVIS. I do not like that man. He frightens me.

SIR GILBERT. I hate him. He 's a coxcomb. I can't bear him.

DEVIL. List'ners, they say—

SIR GILBERT. A cursed coxcomb! Damn him.

DEVIL. Damn me! That 's quite superfluous! That 's butter
On bacon.

ISOBEL. He is full of pleasantness

To me. Who can he be, I wonder? Minstrel,
Or traveller, courtier, philosopher,
Soldier, or what?

DEVIL (*aside*). Just what folks think me, that I am. (*Coming down steps to them. Very courteous, smiling.*) Your very humble servant, ladies. Sir Gilbert, your servant. (*Bowing.*) Merry good day to you!

[*Sir Gilbert scowls at him, and exit into inn.*

ISOBEL. Where have you been?

DEVIL. Not far, and I've returned (*stepping between her and Avis, separating them; whispering into Isobel's ear*)
To see your holy uncle butter Heaven!
Watch him!

[*Re-enter Drogo at the head of a crowd of Beggars of all ages, both sexes,— a very dirty, variegated rabble.*

DROGO (*arranging the Beggars*). Be seemly now! Be orderly.

[*The Earl of Rougemont comes forward with a very meek and sanctified expression, kneels to the Beggars, praying at the same time, lifting his eyes to Heaven.*

DEVIL (*observing him*). Oh, how I love a hypocrite! There's reason
And salary for other sins. For lies,
Lust, murder, robbery, I pay good wage,
But all my darling hypocrites sin gratis,
Do penance, mortify themselves, mouth, fast,
Obey a thousand senseless, joyless rites.
For what? That Heaven and I may both look on,
Equally uncozened, equally amused:
Go on, poor hypocrites, and cheat yourselves.

[*The Earl of Rougemont continues on his knees, praying.*

DROGO (*to the Beggars*). Back, ye knaves, back, ye scullions!
Doff your caps. Know ye whose presence ye are in?

EARL OF ROUGEMONT (*rising*). Chide them not, Drogo!

They are in the presence of the most miserable sinner that walks this earth.

[*Taking out purse to distribute alms.*

DEVIL (*aside to Isobel*). He hath stolen all thy heritage of Carmayne, and he will buy his soul's pardon with these few stray pence. It's a cheap quittance.

ISOBEL (*to the Devil*). Will Heaven quit him?

EARL OF ROUGEMONT (*showering alms amongst the Beggars*). Here, my brethen, my sisters. 'T is all I have by me, but ye are truly welcome. Ye deserve it far more than I.

[*The Beggars scramble for the money.*

DROGO. Long live the Earl of Rougemont! Shout, ye scum! Shout, ye carcasses!

BEGGARS (*scrambling about*). Long live the Earl of Rougemont!

[*The Earl goes to the inn door. The Beggars shout.*

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. Pray not for my life. Life is evil. Pray for my soul. Drogo, see that the filthiest of them all is appointed to scourge me. (*To the Beggars.*) Pray for my soul.

[*Exit into inn; all the Pilgrims follow him except Avis, Isobel, and Lettice.*

DEVIL. Ay, pray for his soul. The breath that 's wasted hereabouts, would turn a dozen windmills. But pray away! Pray away!

[*Drogo looks amongst the Beggars, and selects the most ill-favoured ruffian of them all.*

DROGO (*to the rest of the Beggars*). Away, ye villains! Begone!

(*Exeunt all the Beggars except the one selected.*)

Hither, you scab! Come to my lord's room; bide there till midnight; then wake him, drag him from his bed, and give him forty stripes. Lay them on soundly. Spare him not. Scourge the Devil out of him.

[*Exeunt Drogo and the Beggar into inn.*

DEVIL. They whip themselves for my misdeeds. I like
This doctrine of vicarious suffering.
[*Manent Devil, Isobel, Avis, and Lettice.*
ISOBEL (*to Lettice*). Go see what room they have prepared for me.
[*Lettice comes up to the inn door. The Devil is standing across it, arms akimbo in a contemplative mood; she cannot pass.*
LETTICE. Good sir, will you let me pass?
[*Curtsies to him.*
DEVIL. You curtsey prettily. Curtsey again.
(*She curtsies again, more lowly.*)
You have been well taught, little minx.
LETTICE. My mother bid me always curtsey to a gentleman.
[*Curtsies again.*
DEVIL. You 're a rare judge of character, but hearkee,
(*Whispers in her ear; she turns pale with fright*)
William Gamel 's played you false.
LETTICE. Oh, sir!
DEVIL. Hush! (*Motions her that Lady Isobel may see her.*) We 'll have some further talk about him.
(*Motions her into the inn. Exit Lettice, scared, trembling.*)
Poor little soul! It 's rather sorry work
Damning such sprats. But I 'm a wholesale trader;
All 's fish that swims within my net, and here
(*watching Isobel and Avis*)
Is bigger game.
[*Inside porch, watching.*
AVIS (*following Isobel*). Why dost thou turn from me?
Thou dost not love me as thou wast wont to do.
Thou shalt not give thyself unto the Church;
Thou art not quite resolved?
ISOBEL. Indeed I am.
What else remains to me? The day that thou
Dost give thyself unto thy Prince, that day

I give myself unto my God.

DEVIL (*watching, aside*). To God, dear maid?

AVIS. Then for this little while be all my own,
My very own, my sister sweetheart. Love me!
(*Coaxing, fondling Isobel.*)
Love me, I say, love me with all thy heart!
I will not be denied! Love me! Dost hear?

ISOBEL (*coldly*). Thou hast another love.

AVIS. I want thine too.
What is it that hath come between us, dear?
Is it Carmayne? If it were mine to say,
Carmayne should all be thine.

ISOBEL. And thy Prince too?

AVIS. No, not my Prince, for from my cradle upwards
He hath been promised to me. Is it my Prince
Thou grudgest me?

ISOBEL. I grudge thee nothing, cousin.

AVIS. Then say with all thy heart, speak very truth,
"Avis, I wish you joy."

DEVIL (*aside*). 'T is easily said;
Come, tell a gracious lie. Kiss her and hate her.
[*Isobel suddenly flings her arms round Avis.*

ISOBEL. I wish you joy! Be happy, dearest Avis!

AVIS. Why, so I will be, now thou lovest me.

ISOBEL. I love thee? Yes; what thing have I beside
In all the earth to love — or that loves me?

AVIS. Dear Isobel! How can I comfort thee?
[*The Devil comes behind them to separate them.*

ISOBEL (*disengaging herself from Avis's embrace*).
Nay, let me be! Look! Here 's our stranger friend!
(*The Devil steps between them.*)
Well, good sir mystery?

DEVIL. Mystery? In me?

ISOBEL. You join us suddenly, and all the day
Beguile us with your jest and song. And then
Suddenly you vanish, and suddenly
You come again. If I may be so bold,

Who are you? What are you?
DEVIL. That 's a sore point.
Frankly — I am a fallen gentleman.
I have known better days. I looked around
And saw the world was shamefully misgoverned,
Confused, disordered, and quite out of joint.
I had a plan to put things straight. Alas!
'T was quite misunderstood. I was defeated,
Lost my estate and character. Since then
The world's affairs have grown from bad to worse,
And what the end will be, Heaven only knows!
ISOBEL. Perhaps your character will be restored.
DEVIL. I trust so. I have many influential
Friends at court. Meantime I 'm cruelly slandered,
And evil gossip hath so smudged my name
That in good company I do not choose
To mention who I am. But whatsoe'er
Folks say, I 'm not so black as I 've been painted.
ISOBEL. Poor gentleman!
DEVIL (*to Avis*). Will *you* not pity me?
AVIS. I do not understand your case. Come, cousin!
[*Trying to get Isobel away.*
ISOBEL. No. Stay. (*To the Devil.*) What is your occupation now?
DEVIL. I journey to and fro about the world —
(*Pause.*)
Studying mankind.
ISOBEL. What do you think of men?
DEVIL. Ah! Do not ask. Perhaps I 'm prejudiced!
Perhaps I 've seen too much of them, know them
Too well.
ISOBEL (*very coaxing*). But give us your opinion, pray.
DEVIL. If you will have it, man 's an odd animal,
Much lower than the angels; rather higher
Than the brutes; false, envious, vicious, greedy,
Ignorant, vain, inconstant, superstitious,
Purposeless, impotent, ridiculous.

He knows not whence he comes nor where he goes;
He bribes his fellow-apes to flatter him,
Sniffs up the incense of their mean applause,
And calls it glory. He sets up an image
Of his lank, pitiable, monkey self,
And calls it God. He brags and perishes;
That 's all his history! 'T is charitable
To think him mad; for that 's the only key
To his most strange career on this strange earth.
And why he tarries here, and why he labours,
And feeds and rests, and why he keeps on breeding,
Are mysteries to me. (*Suddenly, to Avis.*) Your pardon, lady,
This is too strong philosophy for maids.
I hear you 're shortly to be wed. And girls
Who are to marry should know nought of life.

AVIS. You seem to see much evil in mankind.

DEVIL. They are a speckled lot.

ISOBEL. But sure, Prince Leon —

AVIS (*quickly*). Cousin, I would not have Prince Leon's name
Brought into company with such talk as this!

DEVIL. Dear damosel, you 're right. He is to be
Your lord and husband. So believe him perfect.

AVIS. I know him for a pure and blameless knight.

[*Avis turns away from him to go into the inn.*

DEVIL. I never knew a knight that was n't blameless
And pure. They 're all alike, the very flower
Of chivalry.

AVIS (*at inn door*). Sir, you have read him truly.
Come, Isobel, 't is near to vesper time.

[*Exit into inn. It is growing dusk. Isobel is following her into inn; stops.*

ISOBEL. No, I 'll stay here and take the evening air.
What is it so disquiets me to-night?
Breathes and o'erhovers, drives about my spirit
With unimaginable dreads and hopes,

And footfalls of some great event to come?
Shadow me softly, angel of my future!
[*Her eyes rest upon the Devil; he is looking steadfastly at her; she goes towards archway. She turns and looks at the Devil, goes towards him, turns, and goes off. A vesper hymn is sung within during the following speech.*

DEVIL (*looking after her*). How wooingly this Isobel doth lend
Her soul unto its ruin. Oh, thou desire
Of every eye! Beauty incomparable!
How gloriously it will become thee, girl,
To sit in that fierce place, swaddled in coats
Of fire, while on the tendrils of thy heart,
Thy woman's heart, fattens th' undying worm,
And from thy honied lips thy honied tongue
Hangs in white scurf of thirst unquenchable.
At other times, when I am frolicsome,
To plunge with thee in hissing lava lakes,
Or burn through blist'ring hails; to ache and pant
Under th' intolerable, thick oppression
Of stagnant air. Then suddenly to snatch thee
To awful heights, breathless, unbearable;
To buckle thee all shuddering to my side,
And ride on singeing whirlwinds boisterous,
Intoxicate with bedlam mirth, 'midst loud
Ascending choruses reverberant,
Th' eternal music that lost spirits make,
Sweeter than dulcimers, more clamorous
Than cymbals, than the lyre more plaintive far,
Groans, howls, gnashings of teeth, desires, despairs,
Heart-hungers, curses fruitless, fruitless prayers,
Tears, shrieks, and wails unending. This is thy lot.
How wilt thou bear these sov'reign agonies,
Proud Lady Isobel?
[*Withdraws into the shade of the porch.*
[*Isobel re-enters; Sir Gilbert is following her.*

SIR GILBERT (*to Isobel*). Will you not walk with me?
ISOBEL. I do not choose.
SIR GILBERT. But I would speak with you.
[*Stopping her entrance to the inn.*
ISOBEL. I do not choose.
(*He comes nearer to her.*)
You weary me! You weary me! Have done!
You are more tedious than life itself.
[*Exit Isobel. Sir Gilbert stands nonplussed. The Devil comes up behind him.*
DEVIL. After her, man! Look how she nods and pouts.
[*Sir Gilbert starts to go after her, stops.*
SIR GILBERT. She seems in anger.
DEVIL. Yes, to draw you on.
All roguery and woman's trickery.
Trust me! I know them! Look! After her, man.
(*Sir Gilbert rushes off after Isobel. Watching very complacently.*) There will be a tempest.
[*Enter Drogo and Sarah from inn. Sarah has a quantity of provisions and a large wine-jar under her cloak.*
DROGO (*very tenderly*). Full of plums, Sarah?
And the stuffed brawn, Sarah?
SARAH. 'T is all here under my cloak, lovey Drogo!
DEVIL (*making a wry face*). Lovey Drogo!
(*Sarah chucks Drogo under the chin. Drogo kisses her. Annoyed, impatient.*)
This middle-aged cossetting! There's something horribly unnatural about it.
DROGO. And the venison pasty?
SARAH. Yes, yes, lovey. Here it is!
DROGO. My blessing! What a rich treasure thou art to me, Sarah!
DEVIL. How now, Drogo?
DROGO (*bowing*). Save you, good sir!
DEVIL. Amen. Where go you, Drogo?
DROGO. We go for a loving walk while the others of our company sup.

DEVIL (*pointing with his sword to Sarah's cloak*). What 's this, Sarah?

[*Sarah turns round, goes toward archway; the Devil follows her, with his sword drawn.*

SARAH. Oh, good sir — pray you, sir —

DEVIL. Uncloak! Let 's see. (*She drops the dishes.*) Is that your supper, Drogo?

DROGO (*unmoved*). No, sir. 'T is Sarah's: I have vowed to eat nought but bread and water on this pilgrimage. I do penance with my lord.

DEVIL. Good Drogo! Follow thy lord's example. You 'll make a good end, Drogo.

DROGO. Sir, I shall strive. Come, Sarah, put away the victuals from my sight, they may tempt me. (*Smells them.*) Nay, I am strong enough to be tempted.

[*Smelling the victuals. Exeunt Sarah and Drogo.*

DEVIL (*watching them off*). That rogue has caught hypocrisy from his master. It 's very catching here in England! There must be something in the climate of this favoured isle that suits with it! When I have time I 'll look me out a pair of very choice hypocrites, and plant them here in England; they 'll breed, they 'll breed, and in a few hundred years the country will swarm with them! (*Looking off.*) Here come my other turtle-doves.

(*Isobel enters, right, in a furious rage, followed by Sir Gilbert, sulky, resentful, baffled.*)

What is it now?

ISOBEL (*With immense disdain*). This fellow, this thing here
That creeps about me, hath so far forgot
The lineage that I bear, and who I am,
That he hath dared to put upon me treatment
Such as he 'd offer in his cups to some
Base kitchen wench. Down on thy knees, thou dastard!
Down at my feet, I say, and ask my pardon!

SIR GILBERT. Thy pardon! Booh on thy pardon!
Hearkee!
You 're a proud vixen, and you must be tamed!
Thy pardon? Booh, and booh!
[*Makes her a mock bow; bursts into jeering laughter; exit. She stands rigid with anger for some moments, stamps her feet with rage, then bursts into sobs. The Devil approaches her very insinuatingly from behind.*
DEVIL (*very softly and sweetly*). Lady, your pardon.
ISOBEL. Don't look at me. I am ashamed to weep.
I 'm utterly alone, forsaken, friendless!
DEVIL. No; I 'm your friend. How often latterly
I 've watched you, and how vainly longed to help you!
ISOBEL. How good you are!
DEVIL. Why do you bear these wrongs
And insults, when so easily you might
Put forth your hand and take your great revenge?
ISOBEL. Revenge?
DEVIL. Upon this holy robber-uncle
That thieves your land! Upon this meek-faced cousin
That thieves your husband.
ISOBEL (*startled, looks round*). Husband!
DEVIL. I said it.
Your cousin has not seen the Prince since childhood;
She nurses her calf-love. He 's a grown man,
And has no taste for pap.
ISOBEL. I am betrothed
Unto the Church. How durst thou tell me this?
DEVIL. You are not wed. Why vow yourself away,
Your warm, live self, your beauty, wit, and grace,
To that bleak spouse, the Church; to starving diet,
To clammy, crude discomfort, prayer and fast,
And chilly vigils with the bloodless saints,
The fire and joy of life damped out! No, no!
You shall not do it! Hark! I know the Prince.
ISOBEL (*listens fascinated*). You know the Prince?
DEVIL. As well as my own brother.

ISOBEL. What 's he like?
DEVIL (*smiles*). He is — a man.
ISOBEL. But what 's he like?
DEVIL (*smiling*). He is — a man.
ISOBEL. Ay, but what kind of man?
DEVIL (*most insinuatingly; she listens with great attention, much fascinated*).
He is the top of bravery and grace.
All the French dames are lovelorn mad for him,
And green with jealousy for his passing look.
He 's lithe as willow, strong as oak, as straight
As fir, supple as ash, as cherry sweet,
Graceful as vine. He 's the ripe spring incarnate!
His veins flush fuller with live blood than June
With sap. His step is like the antelope's;
His thrust a spear of lightning, but his kiss
Is spicery and west wind. Health and bright mirth
Play at his heels, his eyes laugh light, his lips
Speak honey. Such a man is he.
ISOBEL (*has listened with breathless admiration*). Indeed!
DEVIL (*continuing*). He is the bravest knight in all the land,
And on his mother's side his blood is royal.
When the king dies, the factions that rend France
Will one day put the throne within his reach.
She whom he chooses will be Queen of France.
ISOBEL (*lifts herself proudly*).
The Queen of France! Thou dost not say so?
DEVIL (*aside*). Humph!
They 're credulous still!
ISOBEL (*suddenly puts her fingers in her ears*). No, no! I 'll hear no more.
'T is treachery!
DEVIL. No. 'T is but a just reward
To them who 've stolen all your heritage.
Now seize your chance and pay them home again.

Listen. The Prince is here to-night.

ISOBEL. He's here?

DEVIL. Hush! Not a word of it. He's here in secret!

ISOBEL. Where? where?

DEVIL. Within the house, playing my squire.
Hush. (*Whispers to her.*) This is he.
(*The Prince enters from inn door, richly dressed. Isobel shows great admiration. Whispers to Prince.*)
The Lady Isobel.
[*The Prince looks at Isobel; is overwhelmed with her beauty; doffs his cap, and stands gazing at her. The Devil creeps away up the balcony and leaves them.*

PRINCE. Lady, I am your true and faithful servant.

DEVIL (*in the shade on the balcony*). And mine!
[*They stand entranced, looking at each other.*

CURTAIN

(*A fortnight passes.*)

ACT II

SCENE. *The Guest-house of Saint Werburg's Abbey, near Canterbury. Night. The chief guest-table is raised and a rich red damask canopy overhangs it. Supper is laid on the tables. Before the curtain is raised, the Pilgrims are heard singing their vesper hymn without; the curtain is raised.*

Enter from abbey Father Urban, the Prior, a kindly, gentle old priest; he comes down stage and opens outer door to Pilgrims, who enter, headed by the Earl of Rougemont, Lady Avis, Lady Isobel, and Sir Gilbert following. Sarah and Drogo are amongst the Pilgrims. Lettice and the Devil bring up the rear. The Devil is whispering in Lettice's ear. The hymn ceases when all have entered. One of the abbey attendants speaks to Lettice, and takes her up the stairs at back. Attendant comes down.

FATHER URBAN. Benedicite, my children. Your lodgings are prepared, and see, your supper waits for you as soon as evensong is sung. The chapel is yonder.

[*Pointing to chapel door. The Pilgrims move through to chapel.*

EARL OF ROUGEMONT (*to Father Urban*). Is there with you some ghostly father of more than common piety and zeal that can shrive me?

FATHER URBAN. We have here in the abbey one Father Cyprian, who has lately come from Rome and Jerusalem. He is reputed to have great skill with afflicted souls.

[*Isobel is eagerly listening.*

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. Bring me to him after evensong.

FATHER URBAN. He hath kept his cell fasting these two

days, and hath commanded that none disturb him. But I will ask him to give you an audience.

[*Exit Earl of Rougemont into chapel. All the other Pilgrims have gone in except Isobel.*

ISOBEL (*to Father Urban*). My father — (*Urban turns round as he is going into chapel.*) Would this same Father Cyprian give me an audience?

[*The Devil is listening and watching.*

FATHER URBAN. Surely there is no great trouble upon thy young soul.

ISOBEL (*hastily*). No! no! but I need counsel! Oh, I sorely need counsel!

FATHER URBAN. I'll bring Father Cyprian to thee by-and-bye.

[*Exeunt Urban and Isobel into chapel. The Prince enters at outer door; stands there dejected, ashamed. The Devil is cosily seated in large chair.*

DEVIL (*just raises his head*). Where have you been all day?

PRINCE. Hiding for shame
And fear lest she should see me as I was.

DEVIL. She? Who? Your bride? The Lady Avis?

PRINCE. Avis?
She's far too white a flower for me to wear.
No! Th' other one, my fate, my mate, my love,
My self! The Lady Isobel! Where is she?

[*The Devil points over his shoulder with his thumb.*

DEVIL. Praying, in there, for grace to say you "No."

PRINCE (*going towards chapel door*). Well may she pray, for I shall fiercely tempt her.

DEVIL. That's what she fears — and hopes; and while she prays
For strength to say you "No," means all the time
To say you "Yes." I know this kind of cattle!

PRINCE (*comes fiercely down to Devil*). Hear me! I will not wrong her!

DEVIL (*looks at him, smiles*). No. I would n't.

PRINCE (*passionately*). I love her!
(*The Devil grunts.*) Truly, Heaven doth know!
DEVIL (*drily*). Indeed!
PRINCE. I 'm sick of all this treachery! To-morrow
I 'll declare myself — make known my name to all.
DEVIL. So you said yesterday.
PRINCE. But I will do it.
DEVIL. To-morrow. Yes, I think I would — to-morrow.
It always was my favourite day — to-morrow.
I 'll join you and repent myself — to-morrow.
You shall begin. You 'll cut a sorry figure.
How shall you tally all the lies you 've told?
What reason give for your unknightly manners
Towards your bride? And will you marry her,
And bid adieu to Lady Isobel?
How shall you cover up your drunken follies
Night after night?
PRINCE. 'T was you that tempted me.
DEVIL. I tempted you?
PRINCE. Last night you filled my cup,
Plied me till I was sodden, laughing, crying,
Hiccupping, shouting, like a crazy fool.
She did not see me so?
DEVIL. What if she did?
(*The Prince flings himself in chair. Standing over him*). Get up, you ninny! Come! Get up, you fool!
What shall I do with you? I give you up!
PRINCE (*moodily*). Ay, give me up. I know no honest way,
Or to retreat or to go on!
DEVIL. Retreat?
Just as you 've won? She 's yours. You need but ask,
And you shall have.
PRINCE. She loves me. I 'll not wrong her!
I 'll go no further!
DEVIL (*pointing to the chapel*). She is there, just there,
If you but show yourself, she will come out.

[*The Prince goes up towards chapel, stops resolutely, faces the Devil.*

PRINCE. Ere I will go to her, I will be —

DEVIL (*politely*). That's
As you please.
(*Pointing to chapel door.*) She's there! Just there!
[*The Prince goes up to door. The Devil smiles and exit at back. The Prince draws back from the chapel door. Isobel comes out to him.*

ISOBEL. 'Tis you!
All day I've missed you!

PRINCE. I'm not fit to be
In company so dear as yours. Farewell!
Keep free of me! I would not do you harm!
Farewell!
(*Rushes to outer door. Isobel looks at him reproachfully; turns her head to hide her tears; after another struggle with himself he rushes back to her.*)
I cannot go! Heaven bear me witness,
However this wild love of ours shall end,
What desperate straits and burning agonies,
Tortures, and lies, and crooked faithlessness,
Mad joys, and mad despairs, lie in its track,
I did desire to shun it, did desire
To spare thee!
(*Looks at her; then with fierce sudden abandonment.*)
No! I will not spare thee! Hear me!
(*Dropping on his knees at her feet, kissing her hand.*)
If that this kiss I seal upon thy hand
Should bring to thee and me eternal woe,
I would not bate it; I would take my fill.
Say such a spirit moves in thee. Tell me
Thou art my mate.

ISOBEL. You know, what harm or grief
Our love should bring to me, I'd bear it freely.
To suffer is the woman's lot, but, oh!
May never the least pain or wrong or ill

Come to thee, dear, from this deep love of mine.

PRINCE. Nay, thee or me, 'tis all a piece; what each
Doth bear or do or feel, it is the other's.
There 's no division 'twixt thy soul and mine;
In present or to come, we are but one.
Sweep from between us every obstacle!
Pass to me now across all boundaries!
Here! Place thy hand in mine. Look full at me.
Say this: "Wherever thou shalt beckon me,
I 'll come! Whatever thou dost bid, I 'll do!
Whatever thou dost ask, I 'll give, be it
My life, my soul! Whate'er thou art, I 'll be!
Where'er thy fate shall trend, my steps lie there,
To sunny isles and never-waning summer,
Deep bays of bliss or heights of unknown joy;
Or over that dark verge precipitous
Where the lost grope and rage, thy path is mine."
(*She shrinks back from him, half fascinated, half-frightened.*)
Say it, oh, say it! Compass me about!
Speak th' immitigable strength of our vast love!
Bolt up our future! Seal it fast! Outrun
All joys, all woes, all wisdom, all remorse!
Snatch this one thing from heaven! Sentence us
To our ne'er-changing doom, ne'er-changing love,
So that the hungry centuries may ne'er,
With all their bite and wrack, once tear thee from me.

ISOBEL. Swear that thou wilt be constant. Bind thyself
To me as I now bind myself to thee.
Give me thy oath.

PRINCE. A thousand oaths, and one
Close kiss.

ISOBEL. Then take me! All I am or have,
Or e'er shall have, or be, is yours! What 's more
To say? All words are naught, and less than naught.
The nightingale ne'er sung it! All is vain!
The very top of love is ache and silence!

[*He holds her in his arms for some moments; Isobel sighs deeply.*

PRINCE. What now?

ISOBEL. All is so strange! When shall we wake?

PRINCE. Not yet! Not yet! Dream on!

[*They stand entranced in one another's arms. The Devil creeps in at back, and looks at them.*

DEVIL. Why, what a store
This precious human herd sets upon love,
As if there were some value in 't; as if
'T were any rarer sweetmeat than the sugar
That candies over lust.

PRINCE (*looking at her with passionate ecstasy*).
Oh, I shall love thee
Through all eternity, until —

ISOBEL. Until?

DEVIL. Until to-morrow morning.

[*The Prince is bending over Isobel. Sir Gilbert enters from chapel, and sees them; shows jealousy and anger.*

SIR GILBERT (*to Prince*). You fellow, move away!
Give place to me.

PRINCE (*with great anger*). What?

[*The Devil quickly interposes.*

DEVIL. Hush! No words! Remember we are guests.
(*To Sir Gilbert.*) I bade him wait upon the lady.
Hush!

[*Drawing him away from Isobel and Prince.*

SIR GILBERT. But he is always dangling at her heels!

[*The Devil quiets him, and gets him away. Lettice appears from Lady Isobel's room, and comes and stands at top of stairs.*

LETTICE (*to Isobel*). So please you, Lady Isobel, your room
Is ready.

ISOBEL. Wait me there, I 'll come.

(*Lettice withdraws into room. To the Prince.*)
Good-night.

[*Sir Gilbert is trying to watch them; the Devil is busy getting in his way, and distracting him.*

PRINCE (*aside to her*). No, not good-night.

ISOBEL (*going upstairs, looking at him fondly*).
Good-night.

PRINCE (*looking up to her*). I will not say it.

[*Goes a step upstairs. Exit Isobel into her room. Sir Gilbert shows great anger.*

DEVIL (*soothing him*). Hush! take no heed of it!
My eyes are open,
And I can spy a way through him to tame her,
And bring her to your will.

SIR GILBERT. Thou canst? But when?

DEVIL (*very mysteriously*). To-morrow. Meantime shut your eyes. To-morrow!

SIR GILBERT. But—

DEVIL. Hush! To-morrow, man!
(*Finger on lip.*) Now get your supper.

[*The Devil gets him seated at supper-table. The Prince comes towards Sir Gilbert.*

DEVIL (*calls the Prince away*). Here, sir! (*Beckons him.*) This beetlehead is watching you.
Draw you away and be not seen again.
There is a place outside where you may spy
Her window, looking from a little turret
At the south side. Go you and languish there.
Come back when all 's asleep. I 'll wait you here.
Meantime I 'll pack him safe between the sheets.

PRINCE (*going off at outer door*). What way is this I go?

[*Exit at outer door. The Pilgrims have been gradually coming from the chapel. The Hospitaller and Cellarer, and other attendants, come in and begin to serve the supper. Lettice re-enters from Isobel's room, and comes down to Attendant, who gives her a tray.*

Sir Gilbert has risen, and is creeping off after the Prince at outer door; the Devil intercepts him.

DEVIL. How now, Sir Gilbert? Where d'ye go?

SIR GILBERT. To give
Your squire his chastisement.

DEVIL (*turning him right about face*). Go you to bed,
And sleep as soundly as a top until
The morning. Leave the rest to me.

SIR GILBERT (*protesting*). But why—

DEVIL. No whys or wherefores. Bed's your portion. Come!

[*Walks up to dormitory door.*

SIR GILBERT. But—

DEVIL. Hush! To-morrow, man! To-morrow! Hush! (*Gets him off. The Pilgrims are now at supper. Drogo is at end of the side-table. Sarah is opposite to him. Drogo is eating a slice of dry bread and drinking cold water with very great discontent; looking round at the other Pilgrims, who are eating heartily of meat and rich viands. Lettice is going up to Isobel's room with tray. The Devil meets her.*)
About this William Gamel—

LETTICE (*startled*). Yes, sir.

DEVIL. We'll talk it over—come to me here when your mistress is asleep.

LETTICE. Yes, sir.

DEVIL. To make all safe, pocket the key to her room, and bring it with you, d'ye hear?

LETTICE. Yes, sir.

[*Exit with tray into Isobel's room.*

[*Enter from chapel the Earl of Rougemont and Father Urban.*

FATHER URBAN. Please you to sit at supper, my Lord of Rougemont?

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. I need none. I eat not one morsel more than suffices to keep this vile body alive. It is my soul that is hungry. Bring me to the Father Cyprian.

FATHER URBAN. I'll inquire of him if he will see you. Pray you to come this way.

[*Goes up to door. As the Earl of Rougemont is following him, the Devil comes in his way and bows very obsequiously.*

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. You, sir, I've not observed you in church?

DEVIL. Yet I am often there.

EARL OF ROUGEMONT. Indeed!

[*Exit the Earl of Rougemont, Father Urban following him.*

DEVIL (*to Father Urban*). That's a good man!

FATHER URBAN. He has good intentions.

DEVIL. Excellent.

(*Exit Father Urban after Earl of Rougemont.*) I'm always meeting folks with good intentions. Strange that anybody should be damned in a world where everybody has such good intentions! But the government of this planet is my perpetual riddle!

[*Drogo has been sitting at end of lower guest-table, munching a crust of dry bread, looking very sourly round at all the Pilgrims. A meek little Pilgrim is sitting opposite to him, eating very contentedly. Drogo scowls at him. Sarah is sitting a little way up the table, eating heartily.*

DROGO. My curse on all pilgrimages and penances!

SARAH. I thought a full-bodied man like you, Drogo, would never do penance?

DROGO. Full-bodied! Full-bodied! Full-bodied!

SARAH. Never mind, lovey; we shall soon be at Canterbury now.

DROGO. We should have been there ten days ago, but all's gone wrong since that plaguey stranger joined us.

[*The Devil, just behind Drogo, whispers into his ear.*

DEVIL. Look at that munching wife of yours! How she stuffs and gobbles while her poor husband is starving!

[*Saunters round to Sarah. Drogo scowls at Sarah, then scowls at the meek little Pilgrim.*

DROGO (*leaning over the table, savagely to the Pilgrim*). A plague on all guzzling, swilling knaves!

THE PILGRIM (*in a weak treble voice*). I hope I am no guzzling, swilling knave. When my appetites grow unruly, I strive earnestly to curb them and rein them in.

DEVIL (*has got round to Sarah; whispers in her ear*). Look at that greedy old gander, your husband! He grudges you every drop and morsel.

[*Saunters back to Drogo. Sarah looks at Drogo; Drogo scowls at her.*

SARAH. What's the matter, Drogo?

DROGO. You're a very foul eater, Sarah!

SARAH. Turn your head another way, you greedy old gander.

[*Eats coarsely.*

DEVIL (*behind Drogo, whispers*). How could you have married a woman like that — a superior man like you?

[*Saunters back to Sarah. Drogo scowls.*

DROGO. I hope there's poison in that stew! What a waste of good victuals!

SARAH. Hold your tongue, you old winebibber! I'm ashamed of you!

DEVIL (*whispering to Sarah*). How could you have lowered yourself to marry a man like that — a superior woman like you?

[*Saunters away.*

DROGO. I'll talk to you by-and-bye, Sarah! I'll confabulate with you!

SARAH. I'll poultice you, Drogo! I'll posset you! I'll comfort you!

[*They have risen, mocking each other and quarrelling. By this time the Pilgrims have risen from the tables, which are cleared by the attendant Fathers; some bot-*

tles of wine are, however, left. The Pilgrims gather in groups; the Devil is amongst them. The Pilgrims are chattering together.

FIRST PILGRIM. I only know the anthem that I sang
Last night.

DEVIL (*discontented*). Hum! Anthems!

SECOND PILGRIM. Sing us that again.

[*The Pilgrim raises his voice and begins to sing an anthem feebly. The Devil fidgets and has a fit of coughing. The Pilgrim gets out of tune and breaks down.*

FIRST PILGRIM. (*embarrassed*). It does not seem so tuneful as 't is wont.
Sometimes I sing it — you should hear me then!
I sing it sweetly, everybody weeps,
And says, "Sing it again! Sing it again!"

DEVIL (*pushes in amongst them*).
Good folks, I heard a song some time ago.
I wonder if I could recall the tune —
[*Humming an air; they all crowd round him, clamouring.*

ALL. Oh, try! Please, try! Fair sir, you can but try!

DEVIL (*clears his voice several times*).
I 'll do my best, but you must help me through.
And if you find I 'm breaking down, join in,
And bawl your loudest. It 's a merry tune;
You 'll catch it like the plague. Make ready all.
[*The Devil sings.*

THE CASTAWAYS.[1]

A song of lost souls on their way to destruction.

Pitapat! Pitapat! What legions tramp here?
Ho! Hullabaloo! Ho! Hullabaloo!
The rackety crew! The noisy mad crew!
Sing! Hullabaloo!
Jog-a-jog! Trot-a-trot! What stranger rides there?

[1] See alternative song at end of this play.

Yell! Hullabaloo!
The white, white horse!
The pale, pale stranger!
How they rush!
How they crush!
"Good sir, there is danger!"
"No! no!" "Yes! yes!" "Come hither!" "Come whither?"
"Hark, hollo! Come follow!
Come follow! Come follow! Come follow!"
'T is a noisy mad crew,
A rackety crew,
A rickety crew,
With their limbs all askew,
Their eyes squint untrue,
Turk, Christian, and Jew,
Their brows sweat the dew
And their cheeks wear the hue
Of the lost! Of the lost! Of the lost!
Hark, hollo! Come follow! Hark, hollo! Come follow!
Rubadub! Rubadub! Come tipple and swill!
Ho! Hullabaloo! Ho! Hullabaloo!
Come dance down the hill! Come roll down the hill!
Sing! Hullabaloo! Yell! Hullabaloo!

The mad, mad crowd!
The red, red stranger!
What a rout!
How they shout!
They laugh at their danger!
They laugh at their danger!
"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" "Come hither!" "Yes, whither?"
Hark, hollo! Come follow!
We follow! We follow! We follow! We follow! We follow!

[*All the Pilgrims join in the chorus, riotously. At the height of the uproar the solemn tones of the "Miserere" are heard in the chapel. They all listen awestruck. The Devil shows anger, which grows more furious, and at last he bursts out to them.*

Oh, you rackety crew!
You rickety crew!
You crippledy crew!
All your limbs are askew,
And your eyes squint untrue,
Turk, Christian, and Jew,
You 're the sport and the spew [1]
Of old Jove in the blue;
Your brows sweat the dew
And your cheeks wear the hue
Of the lost! Of the lost! Of the lost!
You were gotten in sin,
And suckled therein;
'T is the breath of your kin;
'T is the blood of your kin;
No release shall you win,
Nor find peace within,
For your thoughts are all sin,
And your deeds are all sin,
So grin me the grin
Of the lost! Of the lost! Of the lost!
For strive as you will,
You are castaways still,
You are lost! You are lost! You are lost!
Your souls are naught worth
But to cumber the earth
With the lost! With the lost! With the lost!
You were damned at your birth,
So make mad with the mirth
Of the lost! Of the lost! Of the lost!
Come follow! Hark, hollo!
We follow! We follow! We follow! We follow!

[*They all join gradually in the chorus, and at the end the whole scene is one of wild disorder and confusion. The Pilgrims continue singing the chorus, clinking their glasses, shouting; some of them begin to dance. The Devil slinks behind the canopy. In the*

[1] Revelation, iii. 16.

midst of the wildest uproar Father Urban enters; at first the rioters do not see him, but as they gradually catch sight of him, the noise subsides and ceases.

FATHER URBAN. Peace! Peace, I say! What riotous scene is this?
Keep peace! What ails ye all? Are ye possessed?
(*The noise gradually grows less.*)
Silence, I say! What spirit of lewd noise
Hath broken loose? Who led this sinful mirth?
(*They all look round for the Devil.*)
Are ye not ashamed, to enter here, our guests,
And thus defile our hospitality
With foul unholy jests and evil songs?
How durst ye thus profane this sanctuary?
Who set afoot this riot?
[*The Devil comes out very sedately from behind the canopy.*

DEVIL. Holy father,
I grieve to say that I 'm the innocent cause
Of all this pother! They asked me for a song.
I gave them a sweet, simple lullaby,
A gentle trill, that suited with my mood.
But when they grew to insolent revelling
And wild licentiousness, I stepped aside.
I had my character to keep.
(*To the Pilgrims reprovingly.*) You sang
That song too loudly. There is moderation
In everything.
(*Drawing the meek little Pilgrim aside, confiding to him.*)
Especially in sin;
He that sins moderately sins twice as long,
And twice as much, and twice as pleasantly.
[*The little Pilgrim laughs a feeble, wicked little laugh.*

FATHER URBAN. To bed, then, all of you, and find repose.

To bed without more stir, and take good heed
I hear no further riot or disorder.

DEVIL. I'll keep an eye on them all through the night;
But they're a stubborn crew, and if you hear
Ungodly practices and revellings
I hope you 'll hold me innocent.

[*The Pilgrims are all trooping out.*

FATHER URBAN. Take heed
You keep a guard upon yourself.

DEVIL. I'll try,
Good father; but it suits me best to keep
A guard on other folks.

[*Exit after the Pilgrims.*

[*Enter Avis from chapel, deeply absorbed in letters which she is reading.*

FATHER URBAN. Still sorrowful,
My daughter?

[*Isobel enters from her room, comes downstairs.*

AVIS (*reading letters*). Very sorrowful.

ISOBEL (*seeing Avis reading, shows some alarm*). What tidings
Have been brought thee? Whose letters hast thou there?

AVIS. Whose could they be but his?
(*The Prince enters from the outer door. All through the following scene he and Isobel listen, and show a growing remorse, which at the end becomes unbearable.*)
His last dear words,
Writ by his own dear hand!
(*Kissing the letters passionately.*) Was ever knight
So gracious, true, and brave?
(*Going to Isobel, clasping her.*) Pray, Isobel!
Pray that he may be yet alive!

[*Isobel shows great remorse, just glances at Prince, then desperately cries out.*

ISOBEL. God keep
Prince Leon of Auvergne where'er he be!

(*Disengages herself from Avis; Avis goes to Father Urban. Aside.*)

God keep me too! What do I say? My heart
Gives the swift lie to my tongue. These useless prayers!
All 's mockery! What is to come will come!

FATHER URBAN (*to Avis*). Daughter, be comforted.

AVIS (*shakes her head, puts him aside*). All the day long
I whisper false hopes to myself, and say,
"He may be yet alive.
(*Isobel and the Prince listen, and show growing disquiet.*)
He may have haply
Breasted the waves and found some restful shore,
Some passing ship has plucked him from the deep,
And he 'll return, all glad and hurrying,
To lift me out this pit of grief, and make me
His radiant fast-wed bride."

FATHER URBAN. So it may be,
And any day may bring these blessed tidings.

AVIS. No, no! For every day brings other news:
The bodies of his followers cast ashore,
Spars of his vessel, ribbons of his banners.
No, no! My Prince is dead, and I 'm a widow
Ere I have been a wife.

FATHER URBAN. Be not so sure,
Still hope and pray. Go, get thee to thy rest.

AVIS. I cannot rest. When night-time comes, I toss,
And toss, and toss; the wind bemoans and wails,
The casement shakes, the minutes crawl, a bell
Dongs out and a dog barks, the long waste night
Ekes out its agony! I pray for sleep.
At last I fall into a troubled doze,
And I am struggling fiercely with the waves,
Lab'ring to drag my Prince ashore, until,
Battling and baffled, wearied, overwhelmed,
I madly throw him overboard; his face
Pale and beseeching floats upon the sea,

A dead face on the sea; no hands, no body,
No head, no substance, only a dead white face
Staring and staring, moving o'er the deep,
Mounting each wave, like a dead moon, that face!
Nothing but that dead face on the wide sea.
I fight, hang over the ship's side, and try
To reach it, call, pray, shriek, and tumble over,
Sink, drown, fight, fight, and wake. And the wind howls.

PRINCE (*maddened with remorse, aside*).
Oh, I am false! A recreant! A villain!
A traitor to this pure white soul that loves me!
Where can I hide myself?
(*Seeing chapel door open.*)
God pardon me!

[*Rushes into the chapel. Isobel has listened all through with growing remorse.*

ISOBEL (*aside*). And I have robbed her of her Prince!

[*Father Urban speaks to Avis, who has burst into tears, and is sobbing at his knees.*

FATHER URBAN. Daughter,
This is not well. Thy mind is much distempered;
Come, rise, and be more calm. This is but weakness.

AVIS. Does he yet live? If I but knew! My father,
Tell me, where is Prince Leon?

FATHER URBAN. In His hands
Who holds the ocean as a water-drop,
And bridles all its tempests with His nod;
Against whose strength the sea's strength is a gnat's,
And less than whisp'ring all its noise and fury;
Who holds a count of every living thing;
No tiniest moth escapes His tenderness,
Nor does one little nameless creature-speck
In the wide stretch of sea, or land, or air,
Creep out from infinite sleep to taste of life,
And flicker for a moment in the sun,
And guess the compass of an infinite love,

And then return to infinite sleep again,
Without His sure decree. Thy Prince is in
His keeping. There, rest thou content to leave him.

AVIS. Father, I will. I am much comforted.

[*Father Urban blesses her. Exit Avis. Isobel comes impetuously to Father Urban.*

FATHER URBAN. You also, daughter?

ISOBEL. I am sore distressed!
Did you not say there is within your walls
A holy man from Carmel, who is skilled
With soul-sick folk?
(*Father Urban looks at her anxiously and inquiringly.*)
I pray you do not question;
Send him to me. Pray you, my father, pray you!

[*Father Urban looks at her with grave tenderness.*

FATHER URBAN. He keeps his cell. I 'll send him if he 'll come.

[*Father Urban goes out, taking lamp. All the candles have gone out, and the hall is dark, except for the flickering firelight.*

ISOBEL (*alone*). I will not do it! I 'll repent and turn.
Oh, every signpost that man's hand has raised
To show his wayward kin the road to peace
Urges me backward; all the voices cry,
"Turn, turn, and find the King's highway again."
And this Dictator here admonishes,
"That road you tread goes down to shame and death.
Turn! turn! Seek her whose ways are pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace." Oh, I were mad,
To dally for a moment! I 'll go back!
My woman's honour, whatsoe'er I cherish
Of blameless past, and my soul's house kept pure,
All that I hope of fair white days to come,
All that I dread in that black unknown gulf
That 's fixed between my peace and my desires,
Shouts out and warns, and will not be cried down,

"Turn, turn! the finger pauses on the dial;
Thy doom hath not yet struck; 't is life to turn,
And death to hold thy course. Choose, choose, and turn!"
I 'll hearken! I 'll have done with lies! Avis!
Thy Prince doth live, and I 'll restore him to thee.
(*Running up to door.*)
Avis, thy Prince doth live!
[*She meets the Devil, who enters as a white friar, in robes of stainless white, cowled. Isobel looks at him; a long pause. The Devil keeps his cowl on.*

DEVIL. You sent for me.

ISOBEL. Who art thou? Father Cyprian?

DEVIL. The same.

ISOBEL (*kneeling to him*). My father, help me, counsel me. I am
Most sorely troubled and perplexed.

DEVIL. With love.

ISOBEL (*surprised*). Thou know'st?

DEVIL. Vast knowledge is vouchsafed to me. Go on.

ISOBEL (*after a pause*). I know not how to tell my tale.

DEVIL. Thou hast no need. I know it well, already.

ISOBEL (*surprised, alarmed*). What dost thou know?

DEVIL. All that enfolded lies
Within the secretest crannies of thy soul;
More than thou durst, when thou art most alone,
Whisper to thine own heart. So much I know.

ISOBEL. Thou know'st —

DEVIL. Thy thought this moment. Even so.
Thou art disquieted because thy love
Seems to make war upon thy faith and duty.

ISOBEL. Seems?

DEVIL. Ay, only seems. Love comes from Heav'n. Therefore
It must be good. And whatsoever wars
Against thy love must needs be evil. Therefore,

Thy love is thy first duty, and thy duty
Must bend to serve thy love.

ISOBEL (*much pleased*). Oh, if it were so!

DEVIL. Nay, but it is.

ISOBEL. Then I may go on loving?

DEVIL. Thou must. Thou canst not choose. Let thy heart hearken
How sweet thy life hath been since love hath come,
How full of savour and delight and purpose.
Can that which quickens all the sad dead earth,
Which tunes the blackbird's song and gilds his beak,
Which brings the dear fulfilment of its being
To every living thing, can this be evil?
No, be thou sure 't is heaven-sent, heaven-blest.

ISOBEL. These are sweet words.

DEVIL. Cling therefore to thy love.
It comes but once in all thy long life's journey,
But once, no more. It is thy chiefest good.
Miss it, there 's nothing left beneath the sun,
All else is dross and shadow, dust and ashes.

ISOBEL. Oh, I 'll not miss it. Thou hast given me
Great comfort. My own heart led me that way.

DEVIL (*aside*). These women! How they listen to their hearts!
(*Aloud, going.*) Is there aught else that thou wouldst know of me?

ISOBEL (*with great hesitation*). Couldst thou — since thou hast knowledge so profound —
Show me a little way into the future?

DEVIL. If it will minister to thy soul's good
I could lift up a corner of the veil.

ISOBEL. Tell me — read now my thoughts — shall this befall
That I desire?

DEVIL. Darkly I seem to see
Some great imperial fate and wide renown
Moving across thy sphere.

ISOBEL (*elated*). Ah! Is it so!
DEVIL. What 't is, I know not.
ISOBEL (*impetuously*). Tell me, shall I reach it?
DEVIL. There is a way — why, sure I do not err,
Some way that thou must pass to-night.
ISOBEL (*breathlessly*). To-night?
DEVIL. Know'st thou of such a way that by good hap
Would lead thee where thou fain wouldst be?
ISOBEL. I do.
DEVIL. Then take it quickly.
ISOBEL. If 't were through sin!
DEVIL. Sin?
ISOBEL (*nods*). What then?
DEVIL. Then thou must reckon up the cost,
And strike the balance. Do a little wrong
If some great good may follow. Nay, that sin,
Which should be deadly by itself, is harmless,
When a rich crop of blessings springs from it.
Say that this sin should give thee honour, rank,
Power, opportunity to do much good,
And riches to endow the Holy Church —
How easily were such a sin atoned!
How readily the Church would pardon it!
ISOBEL. But this sin — dost thou know it?
DEVIL. To the pure,
All things are pure. Besides, 't would ne'er be known.
ISOBEL. What dost thou say?
DEVIL. That 's scarce a sin at all
That never comes to light. The worst of sin
Is that it sets a bad example. When
It 's strictly covered up and nothing known,
There 's not much harm in it.
(*Isobel looks up surprised.*)
Not so much harm;
Of course, 't is wicked. Still not very wicked.
There are degrees. Trust me, dear maid, in this.
I would not lead you wrong. And when some day,

(*putting his hand affectionately above her head*)
This head lifts itself high above all heads
And wears a diadem —
(*Isobel shows great pride*)
you 'll thank me then
For this good counsel that I gave to-night.

ISOBEL (*swelling with pride*). My father?

DEVIL. Well?

ISOBEL. I 'll ask thee one thing more.
Oh, 't is the corner-stone of all the rest!
If this is not, all else is barrenness.
Will he keep faith with me until the end?

DEVIL. Until the very end, till thy last breath,
What time and wheresoe'er thou draw it, this man
Shall cleave to thee.

ISOBEL. Then all my days are locked
In a jewell'd future with a golden key,
And every moment of my glad to-come
Blazes in ropes of pearls and diamonds,
On my triumphant way. Thank thee, my father,
Thank thee, and thank thee yet again! My heart 's
Too full. Good-night!

[*Exit with great pride and animation. The cowl drops from the Devil. He stands watching her.*

DEVIL (*looking down at his dress*). Here is a useful dress.
Of all the shapes I take I like this best,
For I can mouth and twist the Holy Writ,
As well as any father of the Church.
How is it such a stock of righteous maxims
Slip from my tongue, melt on my lips like oil,
To grease the slides of sin? Here comes the Prior
To lock me safely in.

[*Coils himself in a large armchair whose back is towards audience.*

[*Enter Father Urban with keys and lamp, followed by the Cellarer.*

FATHER URBAN (*looking round*). She's gone to rest.
Poor child, she seemed in great perplexity.
I hope that she is comforted.
[*Locks the outer doors.*
THE CELLARER (*at guest-table, taking up bottles, yawning*). Our guests
Were riotous, but see,
(*holding up the bottle*) they spared our best.
FATHER URBAN. Leave all till morning. 'T will be safe till then.
[*Exeunt Father Urban and Cellarer. The Devil appears as they go out; now he is in the soldier's dress.*
DEVIL. It's time my other dickybird was here.
I hope she won't be long. My time is precious.
I wish my clients would n't waste it so,
They are so inconsid'rate. And at night,
When I 'm so busy. Here she comes.
[*Lettice enters very frightened from Isobel's room.*
LETTICE. Oh, sir, I 've come!
DEVIL. Good wench!
LETTICE. My mistress is fast asleep.
DEVIL. Good wench!
LETTICE. And here 's the key of her room.
[*Produces key.*
DEVIL. Good wench!
LETTICE. She 's safe locked in.
DEVIL. Good wench! (*Placing the key on table.*)
Now concerning this same William Gamel —
LETTICE (*bursts out weeping*). Oh, sir, it 's more than three months since he left me.
DEVIL (*sympathisingly*). Ah!
LETTICE. And he promised to come back in a week.
DEVIL (*sympathisingly*). Ah!
LETTICE. And I 've not heard one word of him since.
DEVIL. I never met a sadder case.
LETTICE. And such a sweet-spoken young man, too.
DEVIL. Ah! These sweet-spoken young men. How is

it they never keep their promises? Dear! dear! dear!
Well! well! well! Oh, these sweet-spoken young men!
Well, we must try and charm the rascal back. You
remember the oak-tree I showed you as we came by?

LETTICE. Yes, sir.

DEVIL. Go there; walk twelve times round it, saying the charm I taught you. Can you say the charm?

LETTICE (*facing to the four quarters of the compass and then going round the Devil*).

East, west, north, south, wherever you may be,
Turn back, false heart, turn and come to me,
Turn and come again.

DEVIL. Good wench! And whistle! Don't forget to whistle.

When false young men leavé trusting maids, whistling's
The only lure to call them back. Now go.
(*Gets her off at outer door. Alone, watching her.*)
It's shameful! On my soul, if I possessed one,
Women are badly used. It's a hard fate
To be a woman. They are all born fools,
Weak, trusting, doting fools! That they should listen
To me is natural, and I'll forgive them,
For I've some tempting baits. But that they listen
To man, mere man, the greasy animal,
Is folly past belief! And yet they do.
(*Listening at door.*)
Ah! Are you coming?
(*The Prince enters from chapel, quiet, self-contained.*)
So you've been at prayers?

PRINCE. Good-night.

[*Cold, curt, contemptuous. Goes up to door at back.*

DEVIL. What! Off to roost so soon? Good-night.
(*Watching him up; the Prince is about to make exit.*)
Guess who has been with me just now?

PRINCE (*arrested*). Well? Who?

DEVIL. Did you not hear her talking to me?

PRINCE (*comes down*). Who?
Not Isobel?
DEVIL. No.
(*The Prince turns back.*)
She's (*coughs*) asleep. Her maid.
[*The Prince again turns, comes down to the Devil.*
PRINCE (*after a struggle, again turning away*).
Well, what of that? What's that to me?
DEVIL (*goes to outer door*). Why, nothing.
The maid's out here.
(*Locks the door, comes to table.*) The mistress is alone.
(*The Prince again comes down to Devil, looks at him. The Devil, taking no heed of the Prince, carelessly pours out the wine, drinks, watched by the Prince. Offering cup.*) Taste that. I know their vintage here.
PRINCE (*again turns away*). Not I.
Good-night.
[*Going off.*
DEVIL. Good-night. Did you find out her window?
PRINCE (*coming back, fiercely*).
And if I did, 'twas but to swear and swear,
By all the knighthood in me, I'd ne'er wrong her.
DEVIL (*looks at him*). Indeed! (*Drinks.*) Taste that.
[*Offering cup.*
PRINCE (*pushing it aside*). Hear me! I've taken counsel
With my heart. I'm fixed. Oh, I despise myself,
That ever I did listen to thee. Good-night.
[*Going.*
DEVIL (*aside*). Now we have got a virtuous fit.
(*Goes to him.*) I'm glad
You are resolved to be so virtuous.
I like you for it. Just as you had won her!
You're right. Put her aside. Sit down and drink.
[*Sits down, takes up the key and plays with it.*

PRINCE. Why dost thou goad me so? What key is that?

DEVIL (*carelessly*). What's that to do with you?

PRINCE. What key is that?

DEVIL. Her maid left it with me to keep. She locked
Her mistress in her room while she went out.
(*Flings key on the table. The Prince looks at it, is about to take it. The Devil seizes it again. The Prince tries to get it.*)
(*Keeping key.*) Sit down, you fool! Be virtuous! Sit down,
And drink with me, and talk philosophy.
(*The Devil flings the key again on table. The Prince sits down in ill-will, eyeing the key.*)
Taste that! These holy fathers know good wine.
(*Offering cup. The Prince takes it, drinks deeply.*)
Now let us talk philosophy. Heigho! (*Yawns.*)
I hope that silly maid will soon be back.
I promised her I'd wait, and let her in.
I'm tired. Come, help yourself to wine. Don't spare.
(*The Prince pours out, drinks deeply.*)
What were we talking? Oh, philosophy!
(*Yawning, beginning to talk disjointedly as if falling asleep, and slightly in liquor. The Prince sits watching him, and watching the key.*)
How is it women's souls are so dirt-cheap?
That's rare good wine and potent too! What's this?
(*Rubbing his eyes, pretending to rouse himself.*)
Come, come! I can't be drunk. I'm much too seasoned;
I'm sleepy though! Some more philosophy!
How is it virtue is so badly paid?
Oh, I forgot! You're virtuous! At least
Just now. What ails you? You're not drinking.
(*The Prince pours out and drinks deeply.*)
Lend me a hand! I'll go to bed. Good-night.
(*The Devil rises a little in his chair, drops down in*

it again as if heavy with sleep. The Prince watches him keenly. Maundering.)

Wine — women — virtue — bed — philosophy;
All useful things, but seldom found together.
Plague on that wine!

[*Drops off, snores. The Prince gets up on tiptoe, stands over him. The Devil breathes heavily. The Prince takes up the key, and creeps swiftly off on tiptoe up stage, going to Isobel's door. As he is going off, the outer door is tapped. The Devil opens his eyes, looks alternately at the retreating Prince, and at the outer door, where Lettice is tapping; winks alternately at each. The Prince unlocks Isobel's door.*

LETTICE (*without*). Good sir, please let me in.
Good sir!

[*The Devil, seated comfortably, looks from one to the other. The Prince enters Isobel's room and shuts door. Lettice knocks.*

DEVIL. And then they blame me!

CURTAIN

(*A night passes.*)

ACT III

SCENE. *A luxuriant glade outside the Abbey walls. A large gaunt, withered trunk, with dead gnarled branches, in middle of stage. The abbey walls in the distance. Early morning.*

[*Enter Prince Leon.*

PRINCE. She's wine, enrapturing wine! I am a cup
Brimming with richer vintage than did e'er
An earthly summer bear to earthly sun.
Drenched and surcharged I am, yet ache and thirst
For draughts diviner and more secret still,
Th' avatar, nay, the very lees and dregs
Of very love itself! She should be here!
The fainting air pants and is sick for her
As I am! Isobel! When will she come?
Oh, she is life itself! Now may I boast,
"I live!" Dead was I till her kindling lips
Drew me from earth-cold clay and made me man.
Thou art creative, Isobel, like God,
Thy breath doth quicken like His word! She's here.

[*Enter Isobel, as if in great shame, her head bowed, her face covered with her hands; she goes to him, hides her head in his breast. Some moments' silence; he passes his hand very caressingly over her head.*

PRINCE (*very softly*). Speak to me! Look at me!

ISOBEL (*same soft tone, almost a whisper*). How shall I dare
Ever to look upon thy face again?
(*He tries to take her hands from her face; she resists.*)
No! no! First tell me—

PRINCE. Tell thee what?

ISOBEL (*with great shame*). That I—

Am not less dear — less sacred — than I was.

PRINCE. A thousand times more dear, ten thousand times
More sacred!

ISOBEL (*with great entreaty, half despair*). Say thou 'lt
never hold me cheap!

PRINCE. Thou rarest of rare jewels, thy price was such
That my most utmost worth could never buy thee!
Therefore, in mercy sweet and dear compassion
Of my great need, thou lovely prodigal,
Didst give me all thyself!

ISOBEL (*clinging to him, frightened, ashamed*). Oh, never
say it!
If but the wind should hear, the shame would kill me!
Thou 'rt sure there 's nothing guessed?

PRINCE. Why, who could guess?

ISOBEL. I know not. Thou 'lt ne'er whisper?

PRINCE. Am I a dog that I should do this thing?
Be sure no breath of it shall e'er be known.

ISOBEL. What do you think of me? I know you 'll say
Some pretty speech; but in your heart of hearts —
Speak truth! You pity me, perhaps despise me?

PRINCE. Now 't is yourself that holds yourself so cheap.

ISOBEL. Oh, I am nothing worth except to thee!
Thou know'st how poor I am. I stand before thee
Beggared! I 've given thee all.

PRINCE. And dowered me
With an immeasurable sway, empires
And oceans of thy love, and the proud realm
Of all thy boundless universal self.

ISOBEL. You 'll ne'er reproach me?

PRINCE. Could I be so base?

ISOBEL. If you should ever cast one word against me,
One single word of blame, or seem to hint
That I was won too soon, or by a look
Or glance, or whisper, signify that I
Am less in your esteem henceforth for this
Than the most honoured, virtuous, proudest dame

That walks this earth, 't would madden me, and I
Should leap to some unknown and desperate act.

PRINCE. What can I say to comfort thee? What ails thee?

ISOBEL (*bursting into tears*). Thou knowest not what these last hours have been,
The agony of shame and fear and guilt
That I 've endured.

PRINCE (*gathering her to him, sheltering her*).
Hide all within my breast. (*Comforting her.*)
Come, let me wrap thee in my love. Close! Close!
(*Folding her tenderly in his mantle.*)
Now thou art happy.

ISOBEL. Oh, most happy, if I
Have made thee happy! There lies all my joy.
I 'm nothing in myself, but all in thee!

PRINCE. Give me some yet more dear abandonment
Of all thy gracious self.

ISOBEL. What can I give thee?
Oh, if I had a thousand selves, each one
A perfect woman, yet each one more fair
Than all the rest, that I might throw them down
Like rags beneath thy feet, my conqueror!
What wouldst thou more of me than all?

PRINCE. No more.
Thou art enough. This kiss is all enough.
Holiest is sweetest and most satisfying.

DEVIL (*through the leaves behind*). Here is a holy relish after sin!

ISOBEL (*entreatingly*). Our love is sacred, is it not?

PRINCE. Indeed
It is, most sacred.

ISOBEL (*very anxiously*). Holy Church shall bless it?

PRINCE. Yes, yes.

ISOBEL (*very anxiously*). Nay, promise me! Thou 'lt not forsake me.

PRINCE. If I forsake thee, may I be forsaken!

Oh, Isobel, I'm thine!
What heaven, or earth, or hell, shall bind or loose,
Or join or put asunder, shake or fix,
This shall it never do, part thee from me,
Ravish us of this immortal moment,
Shut out my soul from access to thy soul,
Eternal yoke-fellow, eternal bride,
Desired companion, sister wayfarer,
Sojourner with me, and beloved partaker
Of whatsoever strange vicissitudes
Life, death, and that great dark unknown beyond
May hold in storage for us twain to endure.

ISOBEL. Wilt thou for ever love me so?

PRINCE. For ever
And for ever!

[*They are going off together.*

ISOBEL (*looking up into his face murmurs*). For ever and for ever.

[*He bends over her; they go off entranced with each other.*

DEVIL (*coming out of the tree, looking after them*).
For ever and for ever!
What is this human love, this silly joy,
This foolish strange delight each has in each?
It needs must have some sweetness of its own.
If I could taste it! If I could but taste it!
Oh, if I could for one short passing hour
Avoid this withered mockery, this mask
Of painted dust, and wrap myself within
The bosom of humanity, take on me
Flesh's soft robe and veins of tingling blood,
The sluice of tears, the sting and pant of life,
Labour and hunger, sweat and sleep, hopes, fears,
Joys, sorrows, all their great Deliverer
Took on Him when He came to overthrow
My kingdom in this world of mine. If I
Could taste this love! If it were possible!

Vain! Vain! Shut out! The everlasting clang
Of Heaven's indomitable gates yet sounds
Behind me, and along the bottomless
Abyss rings my unchanging doom — shut out!
Shut out! shut out!
(*Pause. Looks after them.*) I cannot love like ye!
But I can hate, and I will hate, until
My hate hath struck your love to its very roots,
Riven it, blasted it, shrivelled all its blossoms,
Scattered them down the whirlwinds of my wrath!
(*Pause.*)
For ever and for ever, did ye say?
Ye fools! This hour I'll turn your love to gall,
Poison your thoughts, make lunatic your bloods,
That now do dance with marriageable drops,
Till they shall burn with anger, fury, hate,
Blind jealousy and murder, each 'gainst each.
(*Looking towards monastery.*)
Here comes one of my shuttlecocks!
[*Enter Sir Gilbert. The Devil looks him up and down, and then bursts into a fit of loud, brutal, contemptuous laughter.*

SIR GILBERT (*nonplussed*). I see no jest.
(*The Devil sits, arms akimbo, and laughs jeeringly at him.*)
Well? Well?

DEVIL. Well, dogstail?

SIR GILBERT. Dogstail?

DEVIL. You are in a base position, all behind.

SIR GILBERT. Behind?

DEVIL. Ay, behind my dog, for he has been before you. Behind the sport, for it 's all done. Behind the market, for the trinket is sold!

SIR GILBERT. How so?

DEVIL. She has given you the go-by. She has played you false with my stripling.

SIR GILBERT. When?

DEVIL. Last night. You snored and he stole the lady.

Now do you see the jest?

[*Laughing brutally at him.*

SIR GILBERT. How do you come to know?

DEVIL. They were here sugaring each other with love-treacle and blabbed out the whole matter. I chanced to overhear.

SIR GILBERT. What can I do?

DEVIL (*laughing at him*). Go back to bed and snore.

SIR GILBERT. The jade! I'll — the minion — the cursed jade!

DEVIL. Use some stronger language! Come, some good round oaths, saving my presence. Now curse away!

SIR GILBERT. Damn them!

DEVIL. Is that all? No more?

SIR GILBERT. If I could kill her!

DEVIL (*encouragingly*). Well — well —

SIR GILBERT. Or him, or both together.

DEVIL (*encouragingly*). Well — well —

SIR GILBERT. Curse them!

DEVIL (*annoyed*). Oh, now we're back at mere cursing! Hearken! Mankind have two most foolish, fruitless habits, cursing and praying. Both are mere wind. Now to action! Why, you poor gudgeon, why, you poor soft-roe, do you stay wriggling and wriggling on her hook for me to laugh at?

SIR GILBERT. I'll do something!

DEVIL. Ay, but what? 'T is impossible you should win her to your pleasure now. Then why do you let her despise you?

SIR GILBERT. She shall not despise me! What shall I do to show her she shall not despise me?

DEVIL (*with great intensity of suggestion*). Tell her that my gentleman is boasting of her favours.

(*Sir Gilbert shows pleasure.*)

Tell her that his tongue is so loose that all our company know of this, — and that, and — the other!

SIR GILBERT. This is good. I like this.

DEVIL. Tell her that we are making merry over her to lighten our way to Canterbury. Tell her that all our blackguards and serving wenches are laughing because she hath suffered the common, everyday, feminine misfortune.

SIR GILBERT. This will be a rare sweet revenge.

DEVIL. Most sweet. About it quick!

SIR GILBERT. I will. Where is she?

DEVIL (*looking off in the direction the Prince and Isobel have gone*). She went that way with him. (*Looking off.*) He hath left her. Look! She is yonder — alone!

SIR GILBERT. I'll teach her to despise me!

[*Going off.*

DEVIL. Treat her tenderly. She is but a woman! (*Exit Sir Gilbert swiftly. Watching him.*) Will this not drive her to madness, and will she not then be well strung for me to play my tune on? I'm thriving here! My main business is done! This marriage between the Prince and the Lady Avis hath vanished clean into limbo! And when that is known, how these kings will fly at each other's throats and drown their lands in war! These kings! These kings! How shall I breed my choicest mischief when kings go out of fashion? I must instruct republics and democracies. (*Looking off, shows great satisfaction.*) Ah! Do you swallow the bait? Have we hooked you? Does the barb stick? Does it rankle?

[*Sir Gilbert enters eagerly.*

SIR GILBERT. I've schooled her! I've humbled her! I've taught my proud madam to despise me. Why, this is better sport than hawking. You should have seen her when I laughed at her. She made as though she would kill me! Now I'll go and tell my grooms, and set them on to jibe her too.

DEVIL. No, no.

SIR GILBERT. Yes, yes.

DEVIL. No, no, that would be unkind!

SIR GILBERT. 'T is no matter. I'll do it!

DEVIL. Oh, be gentle, be gentle with her, for though she does despise you —

SIR GILBERT. Despise me? Hearkee, leave me alone. Despise me! I'll not be despised!

[*Exit eagerly.*

DEVIL (*looks after him*). Hum! Great Heaven, didst thou make these mannikins for thy own jest, or for mine?

[*Enter Isobel, haggard, pale, dazed; she comes up to the Devil, as if seeking to read something in his face; he shows immense sympathy, heaves a deep sigh — turns away.*

ISOBEL (*hard, cold, tearless voice*).

Why dost thou look at me and sigh?

DEVIL. Did I?

Did I sigh? Ah!

[*Sighs deeply.*

ISOBEL. Why dost thou look at me?

(*The Devil says nothing; looks at her with great sympathy, sighs deeply, and then turns and gathers some flowers.*)

Wilt thou not tell me?

DEVIL (*holding up the flowers above his head, drawing them across his nostrils, watching her from behind them*). Tell thee? Tell thee what?

ISOBEL. What thou hast heard of me.

DEVIL. What I have heard!

I hear the blab of men from morn till night;
One half they say is lies; the other, scandal;
Whether 't is true or no, I 've ceased to care.
Look at these flowers. How sweet!

ISOBEL. Art thou my friend?

Thou saidst thou wast.

DEVIL. Why ask? Thou knowest I am.

ISOBEL. Then answer me; on thy most steadfast oath,

Hath any whisper of my name been made
Within thy hearing?

DEVIL. No — that is — no — lady;
I pray you do not ask me. I would rather
Keep out of this affair.

ISOBEL. Of what affair?

DEVIL (*feigning great embarrassment*). It is not right of you to drive me thus
Into a corner. Let me go my way.
If there is any slander in the air,
Or lies, or calumny, or double-dealing,
At least let me keep out of it.

ISOBEL. Face me,
And tell me plainly what folks say of me.

DEVIL. Folks say — folks say — what matters what they say?
If they say evil, take no heed of it.
Treat them as I do when they slander me;
Let their tongues wag and pity them.

ISOBEL (*very piteously*). Nay, I'll know!
Oh, pity me! There is a lying tale
Gnawing at my fair name and honour. Yes
Or no?

DEVIL (*very quickly and positively*). No.

ISOBEL. No?

DEVIL (*much less positively*). No — o.
(*She looks full in his face; he turns away.*)
Have I not said No?

ISOBEL. And lied!

DEVIL (*very sweetly and tenderly*). It was to spare you pain. Beside,
The Prince, like you, is a dear friend of mine.

ISOBEL. The Prince! Then 't is the Prince! What hath he said?

DEVIL. Nothing.

ISOBEL. He would not. For his life he durst not!
I'll not believe it; no, I'll not believe it.

DEVIL. You're right. Distrust whate'er you've heard, and keep
Your faith in him.
ISOBEL. He cannot be so base.
DEVIL. That's what I say — that's what I often say,
Men cannot be so base — and yet — they are.
And if the Prince — but no, it cannot be —
Forget it; spare yourself. Why should you face
The jeers and flouts of all our company?
ISOBEL. Then they do jeer and flout at me?
DEVIL. No, no.
Indeed, I cannot think he hath betrayed you,
And to such dogs as these. Oh, it is monstrous.
He may — he may have boasted of your favours —
ISOBEL. Boasted!
DEVIL. Ay, carelessly! How he hath won you;
But to reveal you to these common ears —
ISOBEL (*furious*). Ay! ay!
DEVIL. To speak of ravishing hidden joys,
The delicate endearments of your love,
The moments veiled and hushed, the secret kiss,
To brag of these —
ISOBEL. Ay, ay.
DEVIL. Why, if he hath,
What then?
ISOBEL. What then? Where is he? I will kill him!
Nay, I'll kill all of them that dared to listen.
DEVIL. Be calm! Be calm! Hope for the best. I trust
Your honour is not lost.
ISOBEL. No, 't is not lost,
'T is in his keeping. He shall restore it!
So he hath sworn, and he shall keep his word.
Yes, he shall keep his word, or — I'll do something.
Where be these underlings that dare to flout me!
Where be these dogs!
[*Exit furiously.*

DEVIL (*watching her off*). From heavenliest love to deadliest hate is just—

(*Measuring the distance with his fingers just in front of his nose.*)

Just half an inch.

(*An impish Child runs on. The Devil shoots his forefingers above his cap so that they appear like horns, bows and scrapes to the Child with great good-fellowship. The Child responds and bows and scrapes to him.*)

My chuck! My pretty chuck!

My pretty, pretty chuck!

[*Making deep reverential bow.*

CHILD (*same attitude*). Good-day, good sir.

DEVIL. Good daddy, you should say. I know my own!

CHILD. I have one daddy now. If I have you,

I shall have two.

DEVIL. My pretty rogue, you 'll need

A spiritual father by-and-bye

To tuck your nose into the honey-pot.

CHILD. I shall like that.

DEVIL. You will.

CHILD. It is so sweet?

DEVIL. Ay, very sweet. You shall smear fingers, nose,

Cheeks, mouth, bib, tucker, all.

CHILD. Then you shall be

My spiritual father by-and-bye.

(*A laugh heard off. The Child looks off, shows great glee, clapping his hands.*)

They 're laughing at the Lady Isobel.

Look! Look!

DEVIL. How doth she seem to relish it?

CHILD. Oh, she is growing mad. She 's run away.

They 're running after her. What hath she done?

DEVIL. Dipped into that same honey-pot. This is

The after-taste.

CHILD. And I shall dip there too—

Smear fingers, nose, cheeks, mouth, bib, tucker, all?

DEVIL. Yes, fizgig, that you shall.

CHILD. What sport! Oh, look,
Here comes her maid a-crying.
(*Enter Lettice, sobbing, looking off. Makes a mouth at Lettice.*) Boo! boo! boo! Daddy, good-bye!
[*Kisses his hand to the Devil, makes him a deep bow, and runs off.*

DEVIL. Good-bye, my pretty chuck.
[*Bows to the Child, turns to Lettice.*

LETTICE (*sobbing*). Oh, sir! Oh, sir!

DEVIL. Oh, sir! Oh, sir! What now?

LETTICE. They 're laughing at my lady.
[*A burst of scoffing laughter heard off; Lettice shudders.*

DEVIL (*unconcernedly, looking off*). So they are.
It seems her pranks are known and
(*Turning suddenly on Lettice*) you 're afraid
That by-and-bye they 'll laugh at you.

LETTICE (*sobbing*). Yes, sir.

DEVIL (*drily*). Ah! So they will.

LETTICE. Oh, I shall kill myself!

DEVIL. Not you; not you! Hearkee, you little wretch,
You 're in a pretty pickle. Whistling, it seems,
Is thrown away on William Gamel. Therefore —

LETTICE (*eagerly*). Yes, sir —

DEVIL. Since you must face the worst, make light
Of it. When folks begin to laugh at you,
Laugh back at them.

LETTICE. Oh, sir, I could n't!

DEVIL. Nonsense!
You can. Come, try a little laugh.
[*Grins at her.*

LETTICE. I cannot.

DEVIL. I say you can. Brazen it out. Be bold.
Fly away shame and romp a roaring life!
Come, come, you merry piece of mischief. Laugh!

Laugh at what's done and can't be undone! Laugh!
(*She laughs a little hysteric laugh, and he encourages her by laughing with her; she grows more hysteric.*)
That's right. I like to see you happy! Laugh!
(*She laughs again.*)
A jolly, bouncing sinner you shall be,
I promise you.
(*They laugh in chorus. The Prince enters behind them. Without looking round.*) Ah! You are there! Then listen
To this. (*To Lettice.*) Alas!—the Lady Isobel—
'T is very sad that she should play these pranks,
And gull so many men. The baggage! Oh,
The baggage! Well! well! well! Say nought about it.
Hush! hush! (*Laughing.*) You must n't laugh at her. Fie! Fie!

LETTICE. I can't help laughing, sir, now I've begun.

DEVIL. Well, 't is a jest, and I must laugh myself.
And so she's fooled my squire amongst the rest.
Ho! ho! Ha! ha!

LETTICE. Ho! ho! Ha! ha!

DEVIL. Ho! ho!

LETTICE. Ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

[*She goes into a fit of laughter. The Devil laughs her off, then turns to Prince, stops suddenly, feigns surprise.*

DEVIL (*feigning embarrassment*). You heard?

PRINCE. You spoke of Isobel.

DEVIL. Not I.

PRINCE. You did.

DEVIL. Not I.

PRINCE (*fiercely*). I say you did!

DEVIL. Well then, I did.

PRINCE. Whom hath she gulled, and what pranks hath she played?

DEVIL. It is n't fair to tell against a woman.
You've had your frolic; now be wise. Forget her.

PRINCE. Tell me what thou didst say of her.
DEVIL. She is
An honourable, virtuous, high-born
Maiden. That 's all I said of her. Do you
Say otherwise?
PRINCE. Take heed thou jest no further.
Dost hear?
DEVIL. I hear. I have some news for you.
(*The Prince is going.*)
The King of France, thinking you safely drowned —
(*The Prince stops.*)
And dead — and glorified —
PRINCE. He thinks me dead?
DEVIL. Well, are n't you? If you are not dead, where are you?
Why have you not kept faith with your betrothed?
Why have you dared to disobey your king?
Well, you being with the saints, there 's nought remains
Of interest to us surviving friends
Save this — what hath he left behind, poor soul,
And who 's his heir?
PRINCE. My heir?
DEVIL. Your cousin Geoffrey
Claims your estate, your goods, all your possessions
And appurtenances.
PRINCE. How know you this?
DEVIL. A herald hath arrived this morn from France.
PRINCE. From France?
DEVIL (*nods*). He 's closeted with Lady Avis,
And now they 're howling over your demise.
(*The Prince paces about in great perplexity; the Devil jeers.*)
My dear young friend, you 're in a plaguey mess.
You have behaved abominably. What 's worse,
You 're like to be found out. What 's worse again,
You 're like to meet with punishment.
PRINCE. How so?

DEVIL. When English Edward finds you have despised
His favourite god-daughter, and slighted her
For Isobel, the daughter of his foe,
Broken your knightly word, refused the marriage
Which he and France had solemnly decreed,
I fear the world will not wag gaily with you.

PRINCE (*turning furiously on him*).
'Twas you that led me into this.

DEVIL. I led you?

PRINCE. Ay, thou! False guide! False friend! Insidious rogue!

DEVIL. Heyday! Heyday!

PRINCE (*enraged, going to him furiously. The Devil remains still, with a mocking smile*).
Why hast thou fastened round me,
Hung on me, played on me, spied me, and dodged me,
Raked out my heart, filched its recessed secrets?
Who art thou? As I look I seem to see
Under that smile some carrion-mauling vulture,
Or stealthy jackal smelling after evil
In my infested blood. What is it makes me
So weak, that hating thee as I do hate thee,
With all my being's bent and force, I yet
Allow thy presence, listen to thy counsel,
Suck in the rancour of thy venomous breath,
And all against my will do traffic with thee!
I'll end it! Leave me! By heaven, I'll end it!
Away with thee! Begone from me!
[*Fiercely, quite close to the Devil, who stands still, smiling.*

DEVIL. I'm going (*going*).
I wish you joy of Lady Isobel.

PRINCE. Yes, yes, I will have joy of her. That word
Restores me to myself. Perish my name,
My hopes, my pride, all that I was and had;
Let me be dead. I live alone to her;
There is no other chance, no other grace,

Wisdom or glory, prize of love or war,
Ambition high, or coveted renown,
Save this, that she is mine, mine, mine!

DEVIL (*pauses, looks at him contemptuously*). You fool!
She 's yours, yours, yours — why, yes, I know she 's yours,
But whose she has been, I don't know. And whose
She will or won't be — that — well, that — God knows.
[*Going.*

PRINCE. Stay, thou detested liar, make thy words good,
Prove what thou say'st.

DEVIL. I had it from her maid,
The simplest wench. You heard her laughing with me.
She told me all her lady's tricks, and how
She cunningly hath known you all the while
To be the prince, and cunningly hath laid
Her plans to trap you, and supplant her cousin Avis!

PRINCE. 'T is false! Thou liest! I say 'tis lies,
'T is hellish lies — (*pausing*) — or yet more hellish truth;
'T is lies! Prove it, I say.

DEVIL. Prove it yourself.
Here comes the lady. Take her without her guard!
Ask her this one plain question — if she knows
That you are Leon of Auvergne. Ask her,
And God be with you for a simple fool!
You are the greenest greenhorn I have met!
Ask her. (*With great contempt.*) You fool! you fool! She 's false, she 's false!

[*Isobel enters, infuriated; she comes up with furious anger to the Prince. They stand confronting each other for a moment. The Devil smiles and exit.*

ISOBEL. Ah, thou art here! 'T is well. Now answer me;
If there is any spark of knighthood in thee,
Let it now show itself! Make revocation
Of all thy dastard calumnies of me!

Then rid me of these gadflies here that sting me
With poison from thy lips. They say — they say —
(*Stops, speechless.*)
Rid me of them, I say. If thou 'rt a knight,
Now do me justice. Dost thou hear me?

PRINCE. Ay.

ISOBEL. Then answer me.

[*Prince suddenly seizes her hands, looks close into her eyes.*

PRINCE. Woman, thou knowest me.
Thou knowest I am Leon of Auvergne.

ISOBEL (*taken by surprise, falters*). And if I do?

PRINCE. Ah! then thou dost! And thou
Hast known me all the while, and cunningly
Hast laid thy plans to trap me, and supplant
Thy cousin.

ISOBEL. I laid plans to trap thee!

PRINCE. Ay!
Deny it!

ISOBEL. I'll not stoop to clear myself.
Believe whate'er thou wilt.

DEVIL (*whispering through the leaves*). She 's false!
She 's false!

PRINCE. Thou 'rt false! Thou 'rt false! Thou hast deceivèd me!

ISOBEL. And thou hast slandered me, given up my name
To common rumour. Now do justice to me.

PRINCE. Do justice to thyself. Thou hast deceivèd me!
Thou stand'st revealed!

ISOBEL (*with a great cry*). Revealed! Ay, so I am!
Revealed to shame, a common byword made
By thee! By thee!

PRINCE. What dost thou say?

ISOBEL (*frenzied*). My shame
Is noised about! The wenches and the grooms
Are making sport with me, laughing, laughing
That I have played away myself to thee.

Dear Christ! I make a merry spectacle!
Avenge me! Make amends! Thy word! Thy word!
Take off my shame! Own me before the world!

PRINCE (*turning away on his heel*). I've done with thee.

DEVIL (*whispering through the leaves*). Thy dagger's at thy belt.

ISOBEL (*hand on dagger, following the Prince*).
So thou hast done with me?

PRINCE. I've done with thee.

DEVIL (*behind her, whispering through the leaves*).
Then kill him! Kill him!

ISOBEL (*snatching the dagger from her belt*).
Thou hast done with me?
No, thou hast not! Not yet, nor yet, nor yet!
(*Stabbing him again and again and again. The Prince falls. Isobel stands paralyzed, the dagger uplifted in her hand — Pause — the dagger falls — she stands as if in a trance.*)
(*Muttering.*) It is not true — it was not I — No! No!

PRINCE. See! Thou hast killed me!

ISOBEL. Thou didst urge me to it.
Why didst thou make my love a mockery,
And give me o'er to laughter of this rabble?

PRINCE. I never did. As I'm a dying man,
Heaven knows thy love hath been most sacred to me.

ISOBEL (*frantic*). Then what am I? What have I done?
(*Suddenly flings herself on him in a tempest of remorse and tenderness.*) Help! Help!
Ah! Thou art bleeding!
(*Tears off her robes to stanch the wounds. The Pilgrims' song is heard coming nearer and nearer from the abbey.*)
Speak, my dear lord! Help!
(*Staunching the wounds.*) Oh, those cruel wounds!
Will they not stop? Help! Help!
Thou dost not think 't was I! Never say that!

I that do love thee more than my own life!
Help! Help! Will no one come?
(*The Pilgrims enter from abbey singing their song, headed by Father Urban.*)
My father, look!
(*Father Urban hushes the Pilgrims; the song ceases; Father Urban bends over the Prince to examine the wounds; other Pilgrims, monastery Attendants, and country folk gradually enter and crowd round the Prince. To Father Urban, as he examines the Prince.*)
Bring him to some physician! Haste! He'll live!
Say that he shall not die! Why, 't is not much!
He'll live! He'll live! Say that he shall not die!
[*Enter Avis; she comes up to the wounded Prince.*

FATHER URBAN (*having examined the wounds*).
These wounds are unto death. Bear him within.

PRINCE. No! No! Take me with ye to Canterbury.
I shall not die till ye have brought me there.
At Canterbury I was to be wed,
There let me make my peace and die. Dost hear?
To Canterbury! I do command ye!

FATHER URBAN. Thou dost command! Nay, know thy place, my son.

PRINCE (*imperiously*). I do command.

FATHER URBAN. Who art thou?

PRINCE (*his eyes rest on Avis; he shows shame*). I am Leon
Of Auvergne.

AVIS. My Prince! My promised one! My love!
My promised husband!

FATHER URBAN. Daughter, give place to us!
(*To the bearers.*) Take him where we may dress his wounds, and then
We 'll bear him to the holy martyr's shrine.
[*They take him up and bear him off.*

AVIS (*To Isobel*). Who hath done this?

ISOBEL. I did it with this hand.

AVIS. Thou? 'T was thou?

ISOBEL. Ay, I.

(*Goes off after Prince; the Attendants and Pilgrims gradually file off in procession: voice heard off.*)

My father, heal him!

He shall not die! I say he shall not die!

Heal him! He 'll live! He 'll live!

[*Her shrieks are heard off; the Pilgrims and Attendants have filed off. Avis has sunk down on the ground, sobbing; she rises and staggers off after the procession, still sobbing. As she goes off, the Devil comes out of the tree and dances off at the end of the procession, Avis's sobs and Isobel's shrieks being heard the while.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE. *Porch and tower of Canterbury Cathedral; night — moonlight. The porch and tower occupy back and left of stage, and make all that side dark, giving a view of Canterbury by moonlight at back on the right and all along the right above the cloister wall. Statuary in the dark niches in the porch.*

Discover the Devil, hanging on the tower towards the top. Clambering down, he surveys the city.

DEVIL. Canterbury! Canterbury! My city!
My ancient, guzzling, brawling, thieving, cursing,
My lying, lousy, stenchy, bawdy city!
My grace and greeting to you.
(*Takes off cap, salutes the city. Jumps on a gurgoyle that stretches out from the tower, sits astride it, his legs dangling, surveying the city.*) Hail, old city!
Why, what's amiss? Strike up that riot yonder!
Begin it! quick! quick! quick!
(*Beating the gurgoyle in impatience.*)
Now, mademoiselle!
That toy French maidenhood of yours, so please you!
Deliver it! No screams! Then gag her, gag her!
My jolly cut-throat, wait your man — he comes!
That's a good stab! Into the ditch with him!
There let him fester! Ah!
(*Laughing, hugging the gurgoyle.*)
Now all good thieves,
Drunkards and harlots, all night's chosen children,
Bestir yourselves, dear cronies, life is short,
And sin is sweet! Be at it while ye may.
Now all you filthy breeding sinners, quicken

And procreate moonstricken idiots,
Thieves, sots, and liars! In your own images
Fashion your brutish progeny! You sloths
And swinish gluttons with bloat carcasses,
Wallow and grunt in your own bellies' turmoil!
Trot out, my little rats, sting fleas and gnats,
Libidinous cats creep all about the lanes,
Flit skinny bats, howl mangy dogs, hoot owls,
Fat toadstools push and spawn!
(*Looking up at moon.*) You're looking on!
Prim, rakelean, bloodless moon! Ashamed of us?
Tuck your squint modesty behind a cloud;
Or hearkee, rank old virgin—
(*Beckoning the moon.*) Stoop and wink
At our obscenity. See all this city
Stew, swarm, and sweat, and suffocate in sin,
To cocker up big Beelzebub and me!
(*Laughing and squealing, hugging the gurgoyle; suddenly stops, listens, jumps on the gurgoyle, stands upright on it, looks out — fiercely taunting.*)
You're coming then! Jog up his parting soul!
Smuggle him into church before he dies!
I've earwigged all these monks and drugged them deep;
You'll find them hard to wake. Now come, sweet Prince,
Find this last refuge barred against thy soul!
Dash her vain wing-beats at the ark's shut door,
No hand shall open it to save thee, no
Deliverer appear! Beat, beat, and flutter!
Beat and drop into th' unfathomable night below!
I wait for thee!
[*Passes into shadow of buttresses.*
[*Isobel enters very hurriedly, panting, worn, desperate.*
ISOBEL (*calling off*). Speed ye! In God's name, speed!
At last, assuaging sanctuary, we gain
Thy sheltering doors.
(*Knocking at porch. The Prince is brought on by*

bearers on a litter, Father Urban and Avis following. Knocking.) Hear ye! (*Knocking.*) Are ye asleep or dead

[*Knocking.*

FATHER URBAN. 'T is strange. They keep a strict night watch.
The abbot's rooms are on the eastern side,
I 'll see if aught is stirring there.
[*Exit.*

PRINCE (*groans, and feebly rouses himself*).
I 'm dying!
Pray them to let me in before my soul
Has sped.

ISOBEL (*to attendants*). Go ye around the church, search out
The other doors, get entrance where you can,
And bring the holy fathers to us here!
[*Exeunt the bearers. Avis, who has been standing apart all the while, approaches the litter tenderly. Isobel places herself in front of Avis and stops her approach to the Prince.*

AVIS. Wilt thou not let me come to him?

ISOBEL. Not thou!
I 've stolen him from thee! Leave him to me! He 's mine, —
Mine by the treachery wherewith I won him!
Mine by the woman's pearl I gave to him!
Mine by the murder that I did on him!
Mine by the undying love I bear to him!
He 's mine! Give him to me! I 'm greedy of him!

AVIS. Thou lovest him! But I have loved him too,
Most dearly! He is my promised bridegroom.

ISOBEL. But he hath made his nest with me, not like
The halcyon on the summer calm. Our souls
Were like two birds that should have homed apart,
But caught with winds, the tempest mated us,
And we are blown hither and thither, baffled,

Together across outrageous oceans,
And vexed, unvoyageable, ruining gulfs;
Here we have made our nest; on these wild seas
We rock and whirl to our despairing end.
Leave him to me.
[*Avis makes a motion to the Prince.*

PRINCE (*to Isobel*). Nay, let her come.
(*Avis approaches the Prince.*) I'd ask
Forgiveness from her. I have deeply wronged
Thy pure and faithful love.
(*Avis goes to him.*)
Canst thou forgive me?

AVIS (*bending over him*). With my heart's truth! Oh,
I forgive you both!
And now I know thou lovest her, not me,
I will not come between you. Yet since I
Have forfeited therein all earthly hopes,
And I shall never now be wife or mother,
(*To Isobel*) Let me once kiss him! Then I 'll give him up
To thee.
(*She bends and kisses the Prince. To Isobel.*)
He 's thine.
[*Goes off away from the church. Isobel goes to the Prince.*

ISOBEL. How dost thou now, beloved?

PRINCE. Far-wasted, drained of life!

ISOBEL. Look! 't was this hand
That killed thee!

PRINCE (*takes her hand and kisses it tenderly*).
Hush! Thou wast beside thyself.
Thou knowest well that I did ne'er betray
The wrapt inviolate secret of our love.

ISOBEL. Thou knowest, too, that I am clear of guile
Towards thee, save this — I knew thee for the Prince;
I 'm blameless else.

PRINCE. How did I ever doubt thee?

ISOBEL. Oh! we have gone astray in this dim world!

(*The Prince shows pain.*)
My love, thou art so young! Thou shalt not die!
Hark thee, my dear! Most wondrous miracles
Are here accomplished, and death-bitten folk
Redeemed to life, plucked from the very grave!

DEVIL (*voice amongst the shadows*).
Ever they ask for miracles and signs;
Ever their God denies to work them one.

PRINCE. I shall not live. Bring me where I may kiss
The murdered saint's most dear remains and thence
Draw sacramental grace into my soul,
That I may pass before my God in peace.

ISOBEL. No! I will pierce the Heaven with cries! I'll drag
Dear mercy down!
(*Cries out in an agony of despair.*)
Give me his life! His life!
I will not be denied.
[*Stands with arms upraised, lifted to Heaven—long pause—silence.*

DEVIL (*in the shadows*). There is none hears thee.
None has regard to thee! Thy God is dead!
[*Long pause—silence. Her arms drop in despair. The Prince tosses and groans in agony.*

ISOBEL. Thou art in pain!

PRINCE. In deadly pain and thirst.
Give me some drink. (*Groaning.*) Water, for mercy's sake;
Fetch me some drink.

ISOBEL. I know not where to look.
Wait thee a moment and I will be back.
[*Exit Isobel.*

PRINCE (*stirs on his litter, sits up*).
God's mother! Hear! My soul will not depart
Till she is cleansed.
(*Jumps up, delirious.*)
Ye shall not keep me out.

[*Getting off his litter, runs staggering against the church door, butts against it, drops, rolls on the steps. The Devil, in the likeness of one of the statues, bends over him from a niche just above where he has fallen.*

DEVIL. Drop there, like rotten apple, on the threshold;
Drop there, thou morsel for my stomaching.

PRINCE. Mercy, dear martyr! Help!

DEVIL (*bending over him*). He hath no power!
The virtue hath gone out of him. His bones
Are playthings, and his church a roost for bats!

PRINCE. Forgive my trepasses!

DEVIL. Recall them all!
Let every wrong that thou hast done in life
Against thy God, thy neighbour, and thyself,
Now dance and riot in thy memory!
The brave men thou hast killed—

PRINCE. It was in battle.

DEVIL. Their widows and their orphans shriek at thee!
Hark! Hark!

PRINCE (*tossing in agony*).
Take them away! Take them away!

DEVIL. Remember these last weeks of sin, thy nights
Of drunken folly, thy pure bride betrayed.

PRINCE. No more! No more!

DEVIL. Behold thy past! Let all
Its dark forgotten caverns flame like noon;
See all thy million little sins come skipping
To ding thee to perdition! Toss! curse! cry!

PRINCE. Mercy! Sweet Heaven!

DEVIL. Louder.

PRINCE. Save me!

DEVIL. Again!
(*Pause.*)
Hast done? Then die! die! die! Die unabsolved,
And kick and pommel at heaven's door till doom.

[*Withdraws into the shade of the niche. Re-enter Isobel.*

PRINCE (*shrieks*). Mercy! (*Stares round.*) My love,
'tis thou!
(*Clinging to her.*) Thou wilt not leave me!
I have dreamed terrible things. 'T is thou, my love?
[*Looking at her very peacefully, clinging to her.*
ISOBEL. 'T is I.
[*Helps him onto the litter.*
PRINCE. My soul is in calm water now;
The bitterness of death is past. 'T is thou!
[*Smiles at her very peacefully; drops back as if asleep; she bends over him. The Devil stands behind her; laughs mockingly.*
ISOBEL. What dost thou here?
(*The Devil laughs.*)
Why dost thou laugh at me?
Thou seest we are desperate! Thou hast
Some strange and subtle power; what 't is I know not.
I pray thee use it now for our sore need.
(*The Devil laughs.*)
By our great misery, by sweet mercy's self,
I do conjure thee, pity us and help us.
(*The Devil laughs.*)
Thou mockest me!
(*The Devil laughs. Springing close to the Devil.*)
Why dost thou look at me
So mockingly triumphant; and dost glow
Resplendent and majestic and enlarged,
As though some evil spirit in thy breast
Swelled thee to wear the diadem of darkness
And sov'reignty of the dread Prince himself?
Who art thou?
(*Quite close to him, she falls back shrieking.*)
Thou
DEVIL. Ay, I. Thou measurest me!
ISOBEL. Then we are lost. We've diced away our souls
To th' infernal trafficker. Lost! Lost! Lost!
DEVIL. Vain is remorse, as vain as love, as vain

As truth or lies, as vain as life itself,
As vain as all the rest. All's idle show.
Ye grope and agonise in this blind void,
Like babes that perish in the womb. Ye never
Visit the light or come to any knowledge.
If one of you perchance doth stumble forth
From your primeval caves where ye do clot
With brutes in ignorance, he drifts alone,
Without a compass, on night seas of doubt,
Where Heaven hangs lying beacons and false lights
To tempt his soul on havocking rocks. There I
Do wait for him. There I do make my prey.

ISOBEL. Fools! Fools! Blind fools! Poor silly, hapless fools!
Sold to the destroyer! Cheated of all!
Cut down in blossoming time. Beggared in spring!

DEVIL. Shed seas of tears; weep till thy heartstrings crack!
Pour forth thy blood and agony like water!
All is of no avail. Come, end these whines.
(*Approaching the Prince.*)
His soul is passing. Give my hate its fill.
Make way for me. His place is ready for him.

ISOBEL (*placing herself in front of the Prince*).
Thou shalt not part me from him.

DEVIL (*advancing, menacing*). Nay, I will.

ISOBEL. Thou shalt not part me from him.

DEVIL (*advancing, menacing*). Stand aside!
Give way to me! His soul is mine!

ISOBEL. I say
Thou shalt not part me from him. Spill on us twain
Strange unimaginable vengeances:
Sheet us in fire: plunge us in boiling pitch:
Rain on us cold accursed rain: bind us
In everlasting ice: goad us with hornets:
Seal us in sepulchres: drown us in lakes
Of blood: dash us on rocks: do what thou wilt.

Our love doth laugh at thee!

[*Takes the dagger from her side, stabs herself with it; stands laughing at the Devil, then falls on the litter beside the Prince.*

DEVIL (*bending over them*). So be it, then.
Come both with me, and be for ever tossed,
Frustrate and devious, on tormenting winds
With them whose deathless love, invincible,
Bought them a place in hell for ever safe
From Heaven's delights and malice. Mate ye like them,
Inseparable, locked from doom to doom
In one last timeless, measureless embrace.

ISOBEL (*very softly and wooingly to the Prince*).
'T is I, my love. Dost thou not hear me? Leon!

PRINCE (*wandering, looking round very calm and happy*).
What road is this?

ISOBEL. I know not, dear. I think
It is the road to nowhither.

PRINCE. 'T is bright
And pleasant.

ISOBEL. Ay, in thy dear company
Thou'rt happy now?

[*Softly caressing him.*

PRINCE (*imploringly stretches out his arms to the church*).
Will ye not let me in?

ISOBEL. Hush thee! I 'm thine! Let that content thee!
Rest thee!
Make calm thy unconquerable soul, my love,
For here 's no thing beyond our strength to bear;
It is a child that fears the dark. Hush! Hush!

[*Caresses him with the utmost tenderness.*

PRINCE (*imploringly to the church*).
Will ye not let me in?

[*Sinks.*

[*The doors of the cathedral are opened. Father Urban appears with bearers and priests.*

DEVIL. What, Mother Church!

Good Mother Church! Will you take in this pair?

FATHER URBAN. Is the Prince yet alive? Why, what is this?
Both slain?

ISOBEL. I loved him and I killed him. So
Have I served myself.

FATHER URBAN. Oh, wretched lady!
What hast thou done? Bear them within.
[*The litter is taken up.*

ISOBEL. My father,
Canst thou yet pardon us? Is there yet hope
For us beyond?

FATHER URBAN. Her bosom is so wide,
Her heart so bountiful, her love so deep,
That doth receive you now, that she, be sure,
Will ne'er cast out one soul that doth but say,
"I've sinned, but I repent me." To all such
Her answer is, "Enter and make your peace."
[*The litter is borne within the church; the church doors are left open. The Devil comes out of the shadows.*

DEVIL (*shouts in at the church*).
Why, take them in. You're welcome. Plaster their sins
With holy oil. Physic them up for Heaven!
Mumble and drone them into paradise,
And bury them. Build effigies and shrines
Over the mouldering worms'-feast. Take them! Take them!
(*Comes away from the doors.*)
And Thou! Work out Thy cunning, aimless scheme;
Spin round Thy maddening maze of foolish worlds
Eternally, like drunken dervishes,
All to no end, save that it is Thy whim.
Let restless matter dance round restless matter,
Till long-eked impotent space and time rebel
And sicken at their own sterility.
Hide Thou Thy childish secret! Make no sign!

Give Thou no hint wherefore Thou hast designed
This deftly dovetailed chaos of creation
To issues of stupendous nothingness!
Let darkened mankind grope in misery,
And Thou be silent! Keep them blind! But give
Full play and scope to my devouring hate
Of all their race. For though my hate is vain
And futile, as all else that Thou hast made,
Yet do I hate, since 't is Thy will or whim!
Now set ye kings to work and ply red war!
Famine and hunger inappeasable
March over these fair lands and gnaw them bare
Till frenzied mothers kill and eat their babes!
Breathe thick on every wind black pestilence,
And taint the universal earth! I see
A merry, busy harvest time, a crop
Of death and ruin waving ruddy ripe
For me to put my sickle in and garner!

[*Vanishes.*

[*Pause; music. The first streaks of dawn appear in the sky, and the Pilgrims creep in one by one in the twilight and enter the cathedral; at length the full spring dawn spreads over the scene, and shows all the trees of the cloister garden in full blossom. Avis comes in, right; Father Urban enters from cathedral.*

AVIS (*eagerly*). How doth my cousin now?

FATHER URBAN. At peace.

AVIS. The Prince?

FATHER URBAN. At peace.

(*Avis bursts into tears.*)

Be thou at peace, my daughter, too.

(*Sheltering her in his arms.*)

For know, all evil and all wrong that men
Endure or do, all misery, all despair,
All pangs, all conflicts, all that hurts us here,
Are but as pebbles thrown into a pond,
That make a ripple, then are seen no more.

So it is with the evil that men fling
Upon th' unfathomed ocean of God's love.
And the smooth water doth not sooner close
Over a pebble with its returning calm
Than Heaven's forgiveness drowns and hides man's sin.

[*A burst of music from the church.*

CURTAIN

The following song may be sung by the Devil in place of "The Castaways" in Act II.

THE DEVIL'S GALOP.

Oh, ride a cock-horse! My jolly cock-horse!
Woohoop! Woohoop, and away!
All gallop and spatter! All rattle and clatter!
At the end, there 's the Devil to pay!
Yes, the Devil to pay!
Well, what of that, pray?
Let us live while we may!
For dogs have their day!
So jump up and away!
Down the primrosy slope, to the door without hope!
It 's woohoop! Woohoop, and away!

The merry broad road! The easy broad road!
Woohoop! Woohoop, and away!
Oh, look how they 're rushing! They 're jostling and crushing!
Good folks, oh, whither away?
Heyday, and heyday!
Take us with you, pray!
All our friends go that way!
It 's merry as May!
Jog along! don't delay!
Oh, the junketing throng! We go gadding along!
It 's woohoop! Woohoop, and away!

There 's a beggar astride! We know where he 'll ride!
Woohoop! Woohoop, and away!
He 'll ride to the Devil! He 'll ride to the Devil!
Why not, when we all go that way?
Yes, we all go that way!
Sad to say! Sad to say!
All the wise go that way!

Alack and heyday!
And the fools go that way!
All the world will be there! Yet there 's room and to spare!
So woohoop! Woohoop, and away!

Kings, beggars, and all! Wise fools, great and small!
Woohoop! Woohoop, and away!
They 'll ride to the Devil! They 'll ride to the Devil!
Once there, he 'll persuade them to stay!
Yes, he 'll ask them to stay!
They won't say him nay!
Lack-a-day! Lack-a-day!
He 'll beg them to stay!
It 's heyday, and heyday!
They 'll ne'er come away!
Lack-a-day! Lack-a-day!
No, never away!
Sad to say! Sad to say!
The behindmost he 'll snatch! And the foremost he 'll catch!
So woohoop! Woohoop, and away!

THE MASQUERADERS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DEDICATION

My Dear George Alexander,

This is one of the many original plays of English authorship that you have successfully produced during your long and honoured management of the St. James' Theatre.

May I gratefully recall our pleasant association during its production, and your striking performance of David Remon, by asking you to accept its dedication in its present form?

Gratefully yours,

Henry Arthur Jones.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. The Stag Hotel and Assembly Rooms at Crandover.

Act II. Drawing-Room at Lady Skene's.

Act III. Private Sitting-Room at the Hotel Prince de Galles, Nice.

Act IV. The Observatory on Mont Garidelli, Maritime Alps, near Nice.

Time: the present day.

"The Masqueraders" was originally produced at the St. James's Theatre, London, April 28, 1894.

Original Cast

David Remon	Mr. George Alexander
Sir Brice Skene	Mr. Herbert Waring
Montagu Lushington	Mr. Elliot
Eddie Remon	Mr. H. V. Esmond
Lord Crandover (Master of the Crandover Hunt)	Mr. Ian Robertson
Hon. Percy Blanchflower	Mr. A. Vane-Tempest
Sir Winchmore Wills, M.D.	Mr. Graeme Goring
George Copeland	Mr. Ben Webster
Fancourt	Mr. Arthur Royston
Carter	Mr. Guy Lane-Coulson
Randall	Mr. J. A. Bentham
Rodney	Mr. F. Kinsey Peile
Sharland	Mr. A. Bromley-Davenport
Jimmy Stokes (an old whip)	Mr. William H. Day
Brinkler (proprietor of "The Stag")	Mr. Alfred Holles
Thomson	Mr. F. Loftus
A Servant	Mr. Theo. Stewart
Dulcie Larondie	Mrs. Patrick Campbell
Helen Larondie (her sister)	Miss Granville
Charley Wishanger (afterwards Lady Shalford)	Miss Irene Vanbrugh
Lady Clarice Reindean (Lord Crandover's daughter)	Miss Beryl Faber
Lady Crandover	Mrs. Edward Saker

Guests, Dancers, Fox-hunters, Hotel Servants and Waiters.

THE MASQUERADERS

ACT I

SCENE. *The old courtyard of the Stag Hotel and Assembly Rooms at Crandover, roofed in to form a hall. Along right is a bar-counter, surmounted by a glass casement and windows, which open and shut down on to the counter. In the middle of the counter is a lid, which lifts up and forms doorway. At the back are steps leading to the Crandover Assembly Rooms. On the left the large old-fashioned gateway of the Inn. Running all round are the old galleries remaining from coaching times. Plants and banners hung about the hall. On the outside of bar is hung a subscription list, in which the words "Widow and Orphans" and "Dick Ramsden" are discernible. Dancing in the rooms beyond.*

When curtain rises Montagu and Charley are seated on stairs; Fancourt and Sharland standing by barrel; four men are playing cards in further room. Brinkler is with them. He comes out. Lord and Lady Crandover enter from ball-room, followed by Rodney and Lady Clarice, who are followed by Randall. Orchestra at back begins playing a polka just before rise of curtain.

LORD CRANDOVER (*a jovial English aristocrat of about fifty speaks to Brinkler*). Devilish rum start this of Miss Larondie's, Brinkler.

BRINKLER (*with a grin*). Yes, my lord.

LORD CRANDOVER. Where is she?

BRINKLER (*pointing off into the bar*). In the bar there.

[*They all look off, and show great interest. Montagu Lushington joins the group.*

CHARLEY (*a very fast, mannish little woman, to Montagu*). Not bad, eh?

MONTAGU. Exquisite. That divine poise of the arm as she draws the handle of the beer machine is really quite priceless.

LORD CRANDOVER. Does she bring you much business, Brinkler?

BRINKLER. Well, she's brought me two good customers, my lord.

LORD CRANDOVER. Who are they?

BRINKLER. One of them is Sir Brice Skene, my lord.

[*Lady Crandover exchanges a look with Lady Clarice.*

LADY CRANDOVER. Is Sir Brice often here?

[*Lady Clarice is showing interest.*

BRINKLER. He's almost lived here lately, my lady.

LADY CLARICE (*to Lady Crandover, aside, bitterly*). What did I tell you?

LORD CRANDOVER. Who's the other customer?

BRINKLER. That mad gentleman that lives at Gerard's Heath, Mr. Remon. There he is in the bar now.

[*They all look off, and show great interest.*

MONTAGU. That pale individual who is dallying with claret in the corner?

BRINKLER. Yes; that's sixty-nine Mouton Rothschild. I get it specially for him. Fancy drinking Mouton Rothschild!

CHARLEY. The man's looking at us.

[*Sir Brice enters from ball-room; comes down gradually to group.*

LORD CRANDOVER. He's an astronomer, isn't he?

BRINKLER. I believe he is something in that line, my lord. And he's got a little brother who is likewise touched.

MONTAGU. With the stars, or the barmaid?

BRINKLER. Miss Larondie isn't exactly a barmaid, is she, my lord?

LORD CRANDOVER. No; her mother was distantly related to the Skenes. Her father came of a good old French family.

LADY CRANDOVER. The girl might have done well for herself. We used to receive her family at the Court, and when her father died, I interested myself to get her a situation as a governess in a Christian family. But she behaved very badly.

MONTAGU. When one is a governess in a Christian family, one is compelled to behave badly for the sake of the higher morality.

LADY CRANDOVER. Miss Larondie has thoroughly lost caste. And I should take it as a great favor if Mr. Brinkler would see that she has no chance of — of misconducting herself with —

[*Sir Brice has come up, and Lady Crandover stops, embarrassed, when she sees him.*

SIR BRICE. With whom? Is Miss Larondie about to misconduct herself, Brinkler?

BRINKLER. No, Sir Brice, I trust not.

SIR BRICE (*to Lady Crandover*). Have you any reason for supposing that Miss Larondie is about to misconduct herself, Lady Crandover?

LADY CRANDOVER (*embarrassed*). I — I am surprised, Sir Brice —

SIR BRICE. Have you any reason for supposing that Miss Larondie is about to misconduct herself?

LADY CRANDOVER. No.

SIR BRICE (*politely*). Thank you.

[*Goes off into the bar. In crossing the bar he has to pass Lady Clarice; he bows to her with extreme politeness; she bites her lips, and returns his bow. Exit Sir Brice into bar.*

LADY CLARICE (*to her mother, aside*). Oh, I can't bear it!

LADY CRANDOVER. Hush!

LADY CLARICE. He has gone to that girl.

[*The next dance begins. The stage gradually clears.*

CHARLEY. Our dance, Monty.

MONTAGU (*giving arm*). So your vestal self is dedicate to matrimony and Sir Digby Shalford?

CHARLEY. Yes; he's a trifle washed out; but we are frightfully hard up, and you didn't ask me.

MONTAGU. My dear Charley, marriage is the last insult one offers to a woman whom one respects. Love if you please—

CHARLEY. Thanks. We'll think about it. By the way, you'll stand a chance with Clarice now Sir Brice has cut her. Her connections would be useful to you.

MONTAGU. What would Crandover settle on her?

CHARLEY. Not much. Clarice would tell me. I'll ask her. What would you do it for? A thousand a year?

MONTAGU (*reproachfully*). My dear Charley, don't hurt my self-respect.

[*They go into the ball-room.*

[*Enter Eddie Remon, a delicate boy of about twenty, highly refined, overstrung, unbalanced. He is followed by George Copeland, a bearded, athletic man, about forty.*

COPELAND. But what's he doing here?

EDDIE. Sun-gazing.

COPELAND. Sun-gazing?

EDDIE. Yes. Look! Here's his sun. She's dragging him through space, and where the devil they're going to, I don't know.

[*Enter Dulcie Larondie from bar.*

DULCIE (*speaking off into the outer bar. She has a large key in her hand*). I've forgotten the candle. Sir Brice, would you mind bringing me that candle?

[*David Remon enters from bar, with the lighted candle in his hand. He is a man of about forty, pale, studious, philosophic-looking. Sir Brice follows quickly, and the two men stand facing each other.*

SIR BRICE. Give me that candle.

DAVID (*appealing to Dulcie*). Miss Larondie—

DULCIE (*stands coquettishly looking at both of them*). That one shall light me to the cellar who makes himself the most ridiculous over it.

DAVID (*coming towards her*). That will be myself.

SIR BRICE. Give me that candle.

DULCIE. Sir Brice, Mr. Remon will make himself far more ridiculous than you.

SIR BRICE. Then let him light you.

[*Exit into bar.*

[*Remon is carrying the candle perfectly straight in his hands. Dulcie turns to him.*

DULCIE. You're carrying that candle on one side; you're dropping the grease. (*He looks at her, holds it much on one side, and drops the grease.*) That's better. (*She stands a moment or two looking him up and down with comic inspection*). Yes, I think that will do. You look very well. Would you mind waiting here till I come back?

[*Gravely blows out the candle, and exit. David stands there. Pause. Copeland comes behind him, claps him on the shoulder.*

COPELAND. Davy!

DAVID (*turns round, cordially*). My dear fellow! (*Very warm hand-shaking.*) You're coming to stay?

COPELAND. No, to say good-bye. I catch the night mail back, and to-morrow I'm off to Alaska. I'm sick of this nineteenth-century civilization. I must do a bit of climbing, and get myself re-oxidised.

DAVID. What is it this time?

COPELAND. Mount Saint Elias, eighteen thousand feet high, and snow at the sea-level.

EDDIE. Davy, your bottle of claret is here in the bar.

DAVID. But Miss Larondie has not come back from the cellar.

EDDIE. She came up the other stairs. She's in the bar talking to Sir Brice Skene. (*The band strikes up a bright dance-tune. Eddie puts his fingers in his ears.*) Oh! oh! oh! Those wretched musicians!

COPELAND. What's the matter?

EDDIE. They are playing horribly in tune, as if the

world were full of harmony. I must get a tin kettle and put them out.

[*David goes up to the bar, shows intense mortification, conquers it. Exit Eddie into ball-room. David calls "Brinkler." Brinkler enters with a bottle and glasses.*

DAVID. Brinkler, my claret here.

[*Brinkler brings bottle in cradle and two glasses, puts them down on the other side of stage.*

BRINKLER. Mouton Rothschild, sixty-nine.

DAVID. So I'm mad to drink the finest vintages, eh, Brinkler? (*Brinkler looks surprised.*) I heard you say so.

BRINKLER. Well, it is unusual, sir.

DAVID. You're right. A man must be mad who drinks the rarest wines when he can get salted beer and doctored gin. Still, you must humour me, Brinkler. (*Brinkler seems puzzled.*) Though what's the good of climbing Mount Elias, I don't know.

[*Turning to Copeland.*

COPELAND. To get to the top of it.

DAVID. But what's the good of getting to the top of it?

COPELAND. What's the good of getting to the top of anything? You've spent the last dozen years of your life and nearly blinded yourself to solve the mystery of sun-spots.

DAVID. But sun-spots are practical.

COPELAND. Practical?

DAVID. Who solves the mystery of sun-spots may show the way to control the future harvests of the world; and who controls the harvests of the world will provide cheaper swipes and smaller beer for Brinkler's grandchildren, eh, Brinkler?

BRINKLER (*comes forward*). Sir?

DAVID. I was saying that the elect of the earth, and by the elect of the earth I mean every man who has a vote, may get cheaper swipes when I have solved my problem of sun-spots.

BRINKLER. Sir?

DAVID. Your grandchildren shall be amply provided for, Brinkler. (*Turns to Copeland.*) Drink. (*Exit Brinkler puzzled.*) A prosperous voyage and a safe return, old fellow. (*Drinks.*) I've drunk to your folly, now drink to mine.

COPELAND. Tell me about it, Davy. It is folly, then?

DAVID. No, if folly is happiness, folly is the greatest wisdom.

COPELAND. You are happy, then?

DAVID (*nods*). Yes. And wretched, beyond all telling.

COPELAND. Why?

DAVID. I shall never win her. She'll never be mine, George. And if she were — that might be the saddest thing of all.

COPELAND. How?

DAVID. When the desired one becomes the possessed one, her beauty fades. I love her, George, and I want to keep on loving her. (*Copeland laughs.*) Laugh at me! I laugh at myself. I was forty-two last August. You know pretty much what my life has been. Drink one glass, old boy, to the days when we were twenty-five, and to our old loves.

COPELAND (*drinks*). Our old loves. Your last one, Davy?

DAVID. Ah! She soured me, but she didn't break my heart. And she drove me to my sun-spots. So God bless her! God bless them all! Whatever I've been in practice, George, in theory I've always had the most perfect loyalty to womankind of any man that ever breathed. (*Copeland laughs.*) Don't laugh, you rascal! I meant it! I've always kept my reverence for them, and I've always known that some day or the other I should meet one who would make me worship her with the purest devotion a man can feel for a woman.

COPELAND. And you have met her?

DAVID (*nods, looking towards bar*). She's in there, flirting with the choicest blackguard in England.

COPELAND. You poor dear fool! You always would pay half-a-crown for anything you could get for twopence.

DAVID. Yes, but I always knew what a fool I was. Do you think I don't know what a fool I am now? George, it's not any empress, not any goddess, but just that girl in the bar there that owns me body and soul.

COPELAND. Pack up your traps and come to Alaska and forget her.

DAVID (*hand on his heart*). She's packed herself here, and here she'll lie snug and warm till all grows cold. (*Looking over to bar.*) And that blackguard is talking to her!

COPELAND. Who is he?

DAVID. Sir Brice Skene.

COPELAND. The racing man?

DAVID. Yes. He's rich. George, if he—

COPELAND. If he—what?

DAVID. He shook hands with her last night. When his finger-tips touched hers, I felt I could kill him, George. And if he—if he—No, I wrong her! She's a good woman. And yet, damn him, he has twenty thousand a year—

COPELAND. Is it a question of money?

DAVID. What do you mean?

COPELAND. I've not a single near relation in the world. My father left me, I suppose, from two to three hundred thousand pounds. (*Holds out hand.*) Davy, say the word—

DAVID. No, George.

COPELAND. Why should you hesitate?

DAVID. I don't want it. I've just enough for my wants. I've only Eddie to provide for. And I've only one extravagance. (*Tapping the bottle.*) I love good wine, and plenty—not too much—of it.

COPELAND. But if you were rich — perhaps she —

DAVID. Thanks, George; I won't buy her.

COPELAND. You're welcome.

DAVID. I know it.

COPELAND. By Jove, I've only just time to catch the mail. Good-bye, Davy. (*They stand hand in hand for some moments.*) I've left a couple of thousand at Coutts's in your name.

DAVID. I shan't use it.

COPELAND. As you please.

DAVID. How long shall you be away?

COPELAND. I shan't come back till I've stood on Mount Saint Elias. Can I do anything for you?

[*Dulcie and Sir Brice appear in bar; she is wiping glasses.*

DAVID. Yes. Tell me the quality of the moonshine on the top.

COPELAND. The same quality as your moonshine here, and just as real.

DAVID. Is anything real? (*Looking at the fox-hunters and dancers.*) I've lived so long alone with only Eddie that the world has grown quite spectral to me. Look at these phantoms! (*Pointing to the fox-hunters and dancers.*) Is anything real, George?

COPELAND. Yes; that two thousand at Coutts's.

DAVID. And friendship. Friendship is real, isn't it? (*Shaking hands.*) God bless you, George. I'll come to the station with you.

(*As he is going off, Dulcie enters from bar, Sir Brice Skene following her. David sees her.*) No! (*Shakes hands.*) Don't break your neck over Mount Saint Elias!

COPELAND. Don't break your heart over a woman!

DAVID. Yes, I shall. After all, I'm only playing at life, and so I'll break my heart over her — in play.

COPELAND. Stick to your sun-spots!

[*Exit Copeland.*

SIR BRICE (*catching sight of the subscription list*). What a confounded lot of widows and orphans there are in the world!

DAVID (*sitting on the other side*). Miss Larondie is an orphan.

DULCIE. Yes, or I should n't be here. I wonder why all we superfluous women were sent into the world!

SIR BRICE (*leaning on the bar*). You are not superfluous. You are indispensable.

DULCIE. To whom?

SIR BRICE. To me.

DULCIE (*makes a profound mock curtsey*). You do me proud. (*Calls to David.*) Mr. Remon, can you tell me why I was sent into the world?

DAVID. To be indispensable to Sir Brice Skene.

SIR BRICE (*aside to Dulcie*). Why do you talk to that fellow?

DULCIE (*aside to Sir Brice*). Oh, he amuses me. I can make such a fool of him, and — I 'm so sick of this.

SIR BRICE. I 'll send you my new mare on Friday. Come to the meet.

DULCIE. I dare n't. What would everybody say?

SIR BRICE. What does it matter? I 'll send you the mare.

DULCIE. No. They 'd all cut me. Would your sister chaperon me? You know she would n't.

SIR BRICE. My dear — you 've made an awful mistake.

DULCIE. Don't call me your dear. I won't have it.

SIR BRICE (*with a little laugh*). My dear, you 've made an awful mistake, and there 's only one way out of it.

DULCIE. I don't wish to get out of it. Let them laugh at me, and cut me. I can bear it.

SIR BRICE. Don't be a fool. If I were to offer you — (*in a low voice*).

DULCIE (*stops him*). No. Pray don't. I shan't take it.

SIR BRICE (*bending nearer to her*). But if I were to offer you —

DAVID (*to Sir Brice*). Will you give me those matches, please?

SIR BRICE. Take them.

[*Enter Jimmy Stokes, an old huntsman in an old hunting suit.*

DULCIE. Oh, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, I'm so glad to see you! How are you, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes?

JIMMY (*beaming old fellow of about seventy*). Oh, I'm just tol-lol, miss, for a hold 'un. How's yourself, miss?

DULCIE. Oh, this isn't myself, Jimmy. Myself's dead and buried, and when I come back to life I shall find this queer creature has been playing all sorts of mad pranks in my absence. Sit down, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, and put a name on it.

JIMMY. Well, just a little wee drop of gin, miss, if I ain't intruding.

DULCIE. Intruding, Jimmy? You ought to be welcome at any meet of the Crandover.

JIMMY. Head whip five-and-thirty years, I was. And thinks I, I'll look in to-night. So I washes myself up, putts on my whip's coat, and here I be as bold as brass. You see, miss, I be a privileged party, I be. Thank you, miss — Woa, woa, miss — woa!

[*Sir Brice and David have been sitting at table, looking at each other.*

SIR BRICE. You spoke?

DAVID. No.

[*The look is continued for some moments.*

SIR BRICE (*folds his arms over table, leans over them to David*). What the devil do you mean?

DAVID (*folds his arms over the table so that they meet Sir Brice's; leans over them so that the two men's faces almost touch*). I mean to kill you if you dishonour her.

SIR BRICE. You'll kill me?

DAVID. I'll kill you.

SIR BRICE. I'll have her one way or the other.

DAVID. You're warned.

[*Sir Brice rises, goes toward Dulcie, is about to speak to her. David turns round and looks at him. Sir Brice stops, calls out to Dulcie, who is talking over the bar to Jimmy Stokes.*

SIR BRICE. Miss Larondie, I'll send you the mare on Friday.

[*Dulcie shakes her head; Sir Brice looks at David and exit.*

JIMMY. Well, here's luck to you, miss, and I wish I could see you going across the country with the C. H. as you used — that's all the harm I wish you, for you was a sweet, pretty figure on horseback, you was, and you rode straight, you and your father, wire and all — you rode straight.

DULCIE. Don't remind me of old times, Jimmy. (*Turns to David mischievously.*) Mr. Remon, it's getting late. Isn't it time you were going?

DAVID (*rises*). Good-night.

DULCIE. Good-night. (*As he is passing out the door, she calls out to him again.*) Mr. Remon — (*David stops.*) I've something to say to you.

DAVID (*coming to her*). What is it?

DULCIE (*tapping her forehead impatiently*). It's gone! Would you mind waiting there till I think what it is?

DAVID. Certainly.

DULCIE. That's so good of you. (*Looks him up and down a little while, mischievously.*) Can I give you a book while you wait? Here's "Bradshaw," the "Turf Guide," this week's "Sporting Times."

DAVID. I shouldn't understand it. I'll look at you.

DULCIE. Do you understand me?

DAVID. Perfectly.

DULCIE. I don't understand you.

DAVID. You will some day.

[*The dance has finished, and a crowd of young men dancers, Fancourt, Carter, Randall, Rodney, Sharland, come chattering and laughing to the bar, and shout for drinks together.*

FANCOURT. I say, Miss Larondie. I'm dying for a whiskey and soda.

CARTER. Lemon squash.

RANDALL. A baby bottle of jump.

RODNEY. Brandy and soda.

FANCOURT. Don't serve him, Miss Larondie. He's three parts squiffy already.

RODNEY. Shut up, Fan.

SHARLAND. A gin cocktail, Miss Larondie, and I'll show you how to mix it.

FANCOURT. Don't trust him, miss. He wants to sneak a sample of your spirits for the public analyst.

RODNEY. Serve me first, Miss Larondie, and I'll give you a guinea for Dick Ramsden's widow.

[*General hubbub and clatter.*

DULCIE. Order, order, gentlemen! Jimmy Stokes, take this gentleman's guinea and go round with the list, and see what you can get for poor Dick's family.

[*Jimmy takes the subscription list, and is seen to go round with it to several of the bystanders, and talk to them in dumb show.*

FANCOURT. I'll go behind and help you, Miss.

[*Lifts up the lid of the counter, and tries to push in.*

RODNEY (*pushing him back*). Sling, you animal. I'm going to be under-barmaid here.

[*They both push in behind the bar.*

FANCOURT. No, you don't. Now, gents, your orders, and no larking with us poor unprotected females.

[*Puts his arm round Dulcie's waist.*

[*Helen Larondie enters and stands watching Dulcie.*

DULCIE (*indignantly to Fancourt*). How dare you?

RODNEY (*on the other side, puts his arm round her waist —to Fancourt*). How dare you?

DULCIE (*disengaging herself indignantly*). Pass out! Do you hear? Pass out!

(*Shows them the way out. Sees Helen standing there, shows great shame.*)

Nell!

FANCOURT (*seizes Rodney by the collar and runs him out*). Pass out! Do you hear? Pass out!

[*Runs him out of the bar.*

BRINKLER. Gentlemen! Gentlemen! If you please, gentlemen! If you please!

DULCIE. Mr. Brinkler, my sister has come for me. Would you mind waiting on these gentlemen?

[*They clamour round Brinkler, repeating their orders for drinks. Dulcie goes to her sister.*

DULCIE. Nell!

[*Kisses her.*

HELEN. My dear.

DULCIE. Come and talk to me.

(*Takes her up to where David is standing. She catches sight of David, who has been watching the scene with a mixture of bitterness and amusement.*) Mr. Remon—I had forgotten you.

DAVID. You had such pleasant companions.

DULCIE. I have wasted your time.

DAVID. It's of no value.

DULCIE. But I'm afraid I've made you rather foolish.

DAVID. In a world of fools it's a distinction to play the fool for you. In a world of shadows, what does it matter what part one plays? Good-night.

DULCIE. No, come again.

DAVID. It's nearly closing time.

DULCIE. But we shall be late to-night. Come again by-and-bye.

DAVID. By-and-bye.

[*Exit David.*

HELEN. Who is that?

DULCIE. His name's Remon. He has haunted the place

for the last month. He's in love with me. I can make him do any foolish thing I please.

(*Brinkler serves the young men with drinks. The music strikes up again, and they gradually go off, leaving the stage with only Dulcie and Helen on it.*)

Nell, I'm so glad — what makes you come so late?

HELEN (*a soft-voiced gentlewoman of about thirty, in a nurse's dress*). I've just had a telegram to go and nurse a typhoid case at Moorbrow, so I shan't see you for a few weeks. You still like it here?

DULCIE (*rather defiantly*). Yes. It's livelier than being a governess, and it isn't so horrid as nursing typhoid.

HELEN (*smiling*). Dear, there's nothing horrid about nursing. It's just like a mother and her baby.

DULCIE. How awful sweet *that* must be. (*Looking at her sister.*) How patiently you take our comedown, Nell. Instead of rebelling and hating everybody as I do, you've just gone and nursed all these dirty people and made yourself quite happy over it.

HELEN. I've found out the secret of living.

DULCIE. What's that?

HELEN. Forget yourself. Deny yourself. Renounce yourself. It's out of the fashion just now. But some day the world will hear that message again.

DULCIE (*looking at Helen with admiration*). I wish I was good like you, Nell. No, I don't. I don't want to deny myself, or renounce myself, or forget myself. I want to enjoy myself, and to see life. That's why I screwed up my courage and answered Brinkler's advertisement, and came here.

HELEN. And are you enjoying yourself?

DULCIE (*defiantly*). Yes, after a fashion. I wish I was a man, or one of those girls upstairs. Why should they have all the pleasure and happiness of life?

HELEN. You're sure they have all the pleasure and happiness of life?

DULCIE. At any rate they've got what I want. Oh,

how I long for life! How I could enjoy it! Hark! (*Dance music swells.*) Isn't that dance maddening? I must dance! (*Begins.*) Oh, Nell, I was made for society! Oh, for London! for pleasure! To be somebody in the world! How I would worship any man who would raise me to a position! And wouldn't I repay him? What parties I'd give! I'd have all London at my feet! I could do it! I know I could! Oh, is there anybody who will take me out of this dead-alive hole and give me the life I was made for?

[*Flings herself wildly round, half-dancing, and drops her head into Helen's lap, sobbing.*

HELEN (*stroking Dulcie's hair very softly*). My poor Dulcie! I knew you weren't happy here.

DULCIE. I hate it! I hate it! Nell, don't be surprised if I do something desperate before long.

HELEN. Dulcie, you'll do nothing wrong.

[*Lifting up Dulcie's head, looking keenly at her.*

DULCIE. What do you mean? Nell, you know I wouldn't. Kiss me, ducky. Say you know I wouldn't.

HELEN (*kisses her*). I don't think you would, but — when I came in and saw those two men —

DULCIE (*quickly*). Boys. They meant nothing. One has to put up with a good deal here. Men aren't nice creatures.

HELEN. Dulcie, you must come away from this.

DULCIE. Where? What can I do? I wish somebody would marry me. What wouldn't I give to cut Lady Clarice as she cut me to-night!

HELEN. Did she cut you?

DULCIE. Yes. She gave me one look — Nell, if she looks at me again like that, I don't care what happens, I shall box her ears.

HELEN. Dulcie!

DULCIE. But if she cuts me, Sir Brice has cut her. And he pays me no end of attention.

HELEN. You're not growing friendly with Sir Brice?

DULCIE. No — yes — he's always paying me compliments, and asking me to take presents.

HELEN. You haven't taken his presents?

DULCIE. No. Don't fear, Nell, I'll take nothing from him except — if he were really fond of me, I'd marry him, Nell.

HELEN. No, dear, no. He's not a good man.

DULCIE. Nell, there ain't any good men left in the world. The race is extinct. I daresay Sir Brice is as good as the rest, and if he were to ask me I should say yes. (*Helen shakes her head.*) Yes, I should, Nell. And I should make him a good wife, Nell, for there are the makings of a good wife in me. I should say "yes," and oh, would n't I like to see Lady Clarice's face when she hears the news.

HELEN. I hope he won't ask you, Dulcie.

DULCIE. Stranger things have happened.

HELEN. I must be going. I've to watch a fever case to-night.

DULCIE (*twining Helen's arms round her neck*). I wish I could have a fever.

HELEN. Dulcie!

DULCIE. It would be so lovely to be nursed by you. (*Hugging her.*) I shall never love a man as I love you, Nell. But I suppose that's a different kind of love. (*Helen sighs.*) What makes you sigh?

HELEN. Good-bye, Dulcie.

DULCIE. Good-bye, you dear, nice, soft, warm, comforting thing. You're as good as a boa, or a muff, or a poultice to me. I'll let you out this way. It's nearer for you.

[*Exeunt Helen and Dulcie through bar.*

[*Sir Brice enters from ball-room, followed by Lady Crandover, Lady Clarice following. Lady Clarice goes and sits down quite apart.*

LADY CRANDOVER. Sir Brice!

[*Sir Brice turns, stops.*

LADY CRANDOVER (*somewhat embarrassed*). Do you know what people are saying of you?

SIR BRICE. I haven't an idea. But whatever it is, don't stop them.

LADY CRANDOVER. Sir Brice. All through the season you have paid the most marked attention to Clarice.

SIR BRICE. I admire Lady Clarice immensely. I have a very ingenuous nature, and perhaps I allowed it to become too apparent.

LADY CRANDOVER. You allowed it to become so apparent that every one in the country supposed, as an honourable man—

SIR BRICE. Ah, that's a nice point, isn't it? If Crandover thinks I have behaved dishonourably, the Englishman's three remedies are open to him—he can write a letter to the Times, or he can bring an action, or—he can horsewhip me. Personally, I'm indifferent which course he takes. Excuse me.

[*Goes off into the bar.*

LADY CRANDOVER (*enraged and almost in tears, goes to Clarice*). My dear, he's a brute! What an awful life his wife will have!

LADY CLARICE. Then why did you run after him? Why did you let me encourage him?

LADY CRANDOVER. Clarice, he has twenty thousand a year.

LADY CLARICE. But everybody says he'll run through it in a few years. He lost fifty thousand on the Leger alone.

LADY CRANDOVER. I know. Oh yes, he'll get through it. Well, now you've lost him, it's a great comfort to think what a perfect brute he is. You've had a lucky escape.

[*Dulcie re-enters from bar. Jimmy re-enters with subscription list.*

LADY CLARICE (*watching Dulcie*). Yes, but I don't like being thrown aside for that miss there.

DULCIE. What luck, Jimmy?

(*Jimmy shakes his head. She takes the subscription list from him*). Oh, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, when we keep a Punch and Judy show, I'll never send you round with the hat.

JIMMY. Ah, miss, we know how you could get a peck of money for 'em — don't we, Mr. Fancourt?

FANCOURT. By Jove, yes. Jimmy has made a splendid suggestion, Miss Larondie. The only question is, will you agree to it?

DULCIE. What is it, Jimmy?

JIMMY. You back me up, miss, that's all, will you?

DULCIE. Certainly. Anything to keep Mrs. Ramsden and her chickabiddies out of the workhouse. I always feel, you know, Jimmy, that it was through me that Dick was killed.

FANCOURT. Through you, Miss Larondie?

DULCIE. I was leading across Drubhill. I took the drop into the road. Dick was next behind. His horse stumbled and (*shudders*) they picked him up dead. [*All the young fellows have crowded round and listen.*

JIMMY. 'T was me as picked him up if you remember, miss, and took him home, I did; ah, it's three years ago last February, yes, and I broke the news to his wife, I did, and what's more, I helped to lay Dick out, I did, and I says to his wife, "Don't take on now, you foolish woman," I says; "why," I says, "it might have been *felo-de-se*." But it were a nasty drop jump, miss, a nasty drop jump.

DULCIE. And if I hadn't taken it, perhaps Dick might have been alive now.

JIMMY. Not he, not he. Dick'd have drunk himself to death before this. He was a royal soul, Dick was. And if you'll only back me up, we'll raise a little fortune for Mrs. Ramsden in no time.

DULCIE. Very well, Jimmy. But what is this plan, eh, Mr. Fancourt?

FANCOURT. Tell her, Jimmy. You started it.

JIMMY. Well, miss, seeing all these young gents here, it struck me as, human nature being what it is, and no getting over it, no offence I hope to anybody, but if you was to offer to sell one, mind you, only one, of your kisses to the highest bidder—

DULCIE (*indignantly*). What?

MONTAGU. A very excellent and original suggestion!

DULCIE. The idea! What nonsense!

FANCOURT. Nonsense? I call it a jolly good idea.

SHARLAND. Splendid! By Jove, we'll carry it out, too.

DULCIE. Indeed we won't. Jimmy, give me that list. (*Takes the subscription list from Jimmy.*) Mr. Fancourt will give me something, I'm sure.

FANCOURT. I should be delighted, but (*nudging Sharland*) fact is, I've promised Sharland I would n't give anything except on the conditions Jimmy Stokes has just laid down.

DULCIE. Mr. Sharland.

SHARLAND. Very sorry, Miss Larondie, but (*nudging Fancourt*) fact is I've promised Fancourt I would n't give anything except on the conditions Jimmy Stokes has laid down.

[*Dulcie turns away indignantly, sees Lady Crandover and Lady Clarice, hesitates a moment, then goes somewhat defiantly to them.*

DULCIE. Lady Crandover, may I beg you for a small subscription to Dick Ramsden's widow and children?

LADY CRANDOVER (*very coolly*). I always leave such things to Lord Crandover.

[*Turns away.*

DULCIE. Perhaps Lady Clarice—

LADY CRANDOVER. I thought I heard some one propose a way in which you could raise some money.

SIR BRICE (*coming from bar*). Raise some money? What's the matter here?

FANCOURT. Jimmy Stokes has just proposed that Miss

Larondie should benefit the Dick Ramsden fund by selling a kiss by auction.

SIR BRICE. What does Miss Larondie say?

DULCIE. Impossible!

MONTAGU. Not in the least. If you will allow me, gentlemen, I will constitute myself auctioneer. (*To Dulcie.*) I beg you will place yourself entirely in my hands, Miss Larondie. Trust to my tact to bring this affair to a most successful issue. After all, it's not so indelicate as slumming.

DULCIE. No, no!

MONTAGU. Allow me. A rostrum. Rodney, you are my clerk. That wine case. (*A wine case is brought forward from side.*) And that barrel, if you please. A hammer. (*A large mallet, such as is used for hammering bungs in beer barrels, is given to him.*) Thank you. (*He mounts.*) Ladies and gentlemen. (*Chorus of "Hear, hear!"*) We must all admit that the methods of raising the wind for all sorts of worthless persons and useless charities stand in need of entire revision. Fancy fairs, amateur theatricals, tableaux vivants, and such grotesque futilities have had their day. In the interest of those long-suffering persons who get up charity entertainments, and those yet more long-suffering persons who attend them, it is high time to inaugurate a new departure. (*Cries of "Hear, hear!"*) Ladies and gentlemen, there are three questions I take it which we ask ourselves when we raise a charitable subscription. Firstly, how shall we advertise ourselves, or amuse ourselves, as the case may be? Secondly, how far shall we be able to fleece our friends and the public? Thirdly, is the charity a deserving one? The only really vital question of the three is "How shall we amuse ourselves in the sacred cause of charity?"

[*Cries of "Hear, hear!"*

LADY CRANDOVER. Lushington, stop this nonsense before it goes any further! Do you hear?

MONTAGU. Ladies and gentlemen, I am in your hands. Shall I go on?

[*Loud cries of "Yes, yes — Go on — Go on, Monty — Go on, Lushington."*

LADY CRANDOVER (*to Lady Clarice*). Now she'll disgrace herself.

SIR BRICE (*having overheard*). What did you say, Lady Crandover?

LADY CRANDOVER. Nothing, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. I understood you to say that Miss Larondie would disgrace herself.

DULCIE (*with shame*). Oh, Sir Brice, please let me go!

[*David Remon enters. Dulcie, going off, comes face to face with him — stops.*

SIR BRICE. No, stay. Don't take any notice of what has been said.

DAVID. What has been said?

SIR BRICE. What business is it of yours? Miss Larondie is a connection of my family. Go on, Lushington — Go on. We'll have this auction — it's in the cause of charity, isn't it? Go on!

DAVID (*to Montagu*). What auction? What charity?

MONTAGU (*soothingly*). Gentlemen, gentlemen, we are taking this far too seriously. Pray be calm and allow me to proceed. (*Cries of "Hear! Hear! — Go on, Monty!"*) In an age when, as all good moralists lament, love is so often brought into the market, the marriage market — and other markets — and is sold to the highest bidder, it would, I am convinced, require a far more alarming outrage on propriety than that which we are now about to commit, to cause the now obsolete and unfashionable blush of shame to mount into the now obsolete and unfashionable cheek of modesty. Gentlemen, without further ado I offer for your competition — one kiss from Miss Larondie.

(*Movement on the part of David. Sir Brice and he stand confronting each other.*)

One kiss from Miss Larondie. What shall I say, gentlemen?

FANCOURT. A sovereign.

MONTAGU. A sovereign is offered. I will on my own account advance ten shillings. Thirty shillings is offered, gentlemen.

SHARLAND. Thirty-five shillings.

MONTAGU. I cannot take an advance of less than ten shillings on this lot. Shall I say two pounds?

[*Sharland nods.*

SIR BRICE. A fiver.

[*David steps forward towards Sir Brice.*

MONTAGU. Thank you. A fiver. You are trifling, gentlemen.

FANCOURT. Six.

MONTAGU. Six guineas — guineas only. Six guineas is offered. Gentlemen, if you do not bid up, in justice to my client I must withdraw the lot.

SHARLAND. Seven.

SIR BRICE. Ten.

MONTAGU. Ten guineas. Gentlemen, only ten guineas — only ten guineas for this rare and genuine, this highly desirable —

DAVID. Twenty guineas.

MONTAGU. Twenty guineas. Thank you, sir. This gentleman sees the quality of the article I am submitting —

SIR BRICE. Thirty.

MONTAGU. Thirty guineas. Gentlemen, is the age of chivalry dead? Mr. Fancourt, you are credited with some small amount of prowess among helpless ladies —

SHARLAND. Cut in, Fan.

FANCOURT. Thirty-one.

MONTAGU. Cannot take advances of less than five guineas. Thirty-five guineas. Gentlemen, will you force me to expatiate further on this exquisite —

DAVID. Forty.

SIR BRICE. Fifty.

[*David and Sir Brice are getting nearer to each other.*

LORD CRANDOVER. Lushington, this is enough. This is getting beyond a joke.

MONTAGU. Then it's the only thing in life that ever did, so we'll continue. (*General laugh.*) Bid up, gentlemen, bid up. I am assured, gentlemen, by my client, the vendor, that on no account will this lot ever be duplicated. I am therefore offering you a unique opportunity of purchasing what I will venture to describe as the most —

DAVID. Sixty.

SIR BRICE. Seventy.

LORD CRANDOVER. Enough — enough! Stop this jest.

MONTAGU. Jest? I presume you are in earnest, gentlemen, about the purchase of this lot?

DAVID. I am.

SIR BRICE. Go on, go on.

MONTAGU. Seventy guineas, seventy guineas. Gentlemen, you have not all done? Mr. Fancourt, faint heart —

SHARLAND. Have another shy, Fan.

FANCOURT. Seventy-five.

MONTAGU. Seventy-five. Going at seventy-five guineas — the only chance; going at seventy-five guineas.

FANCOURT. I say, Bricey, don't let me in.

SIR BRICE (*looking at David*). Eighty.

DAVID. Ninety.

SIR BRICE (*getting close to David*). A hundred.

DAVID. Two hundred.

SIR BRICE. Three hundred.

LORD CRANDOVER. Skene, come away, do you hear? Come away.

[*Tries to drag Sir Brice away.*

SIR BRICE. Let me be. What's the last bidding, Lushington?

MONTAGU. Three hundred guineas.

SIR BRICE. Five.

DAVID. A thousand.

SIR BRICE. Fifteen hundred.

DAVID. Two thousand.

SIR BRICE. Three, and (*growling*) be damned to you! (*Pause.*) Knock it down, Lushington.

[*Long pause. David shows disappointment.*

MONTAGU. Three thousand guineas is offered, gentlemen. (*Pause.*) No further bid? Going at three thousand. Going, going. (*Knocks it down.*) Sir Brice, the lot is yours at three thousand guineas.

SIR BRICE. Brinkler, pens, ink, and paper and a stamp. (*Steps towards barrel. David comes to him.*) You've no further business here.

DAVID. Yes, I think.

[*Pens, ink, and paper are brought to Sir Brice; he hastily dashes off the cheque, gives it to Montagu.*

MONTAGU. Thank you. Miss Larondie, a cheque for three thousand guineas. You have secured an annuity for your *protégées.*

DULCIE (*refusing the cheque*). No.

SIR BRICE. Miss Larondie. (*David looks at him.*) It will perhaps save any further misconstruction if I tell these ladies and gentlemen that an hour ago I asked you to do me the honour to become my wife.

[*General surprise.*

DULCIE. Sir Brice—

SIR BRICE. Will you do me the favour to take that cheque for your charity, and the further favour of becoming Lady Skene?

[*Montagu offers the cheque. A pause. Dulcie looks round, looks at Lady Clarice, takes the cheque.*

DULCIE. Thank you, Sir Brice. I shall be very proud.

[*David shows quiet despair. Goes to back. Half the guests crowd round Sir Brice and Dulcie, congratulating. The others show surprise, interest and amazement.*

LADY CRANDOVER (*in a very loud voice*). My carriage at once.

LORD CRANDOVER (*in a low voice to her*). We'd better stay and make the best of it.

LADY CRANDOVER. No, my carriage. Come, Clarice.

[*Goes off. A good many of the guests follow her. Exeunt Lady Clarice and Lord Crandover.*

SIR BRICE (*to Fancourt*). The Crandovers have gone off in a huff. Bet you a tenner they'll dine with me before three months.

FANCOURT. Done!

SIR BRICE (*to Dulcie*). If you will allow me, I will place you in my sister's care. She's in the ball-room.

DULCIE (*looking at her dress*). No, Sir Brice, not yet. I've one of my old evening dresses upstairs. May I put it on?

SIR BRICE. Yes, if you like. I'll wait for you at the ball-room door.

DULCIE. I won't be a moment.

[*Running off up stairs with great excitement and delight.*

MONTAGU (*to Sir Brice*). Congratulate you heartily, Sir Brice.

[*Offering hand.*

SIR BRICE (*taking it*). Oh, I suppose it's all right.

SHARLAND (*to Sir Brice*). Your wooing was charmingly fresh and original, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. Think so?

CHARLEY (*to Monty*). What on earth does he want to marry the girl for?

MONTAGU. Somebody has bet him a guinea he would n't.

[*Exeunt Charley and Montagu into the ball-room.*

FANCOURT. Bravo, Bricey, my boy! This 'll make up to you for losing the Leger.

SIR BRICE. Think so? I'll go and get a smoke outside.

[*Exit at gates.*

SHARLAND (*to Fancourt*). Just like Bricey to do a silly fool's trick like this.

FANCOURT. I pity the girl. Bricey will make a sweet thing in husbands.

SHARLAND. By Jove, yes. Her life 'll be a regular beno, and no mistake.

[*Exeunt. David is left alone sitting at back.*

[*Enter Eddie. David drinks and laughs rather bitterly to himself.*

EDDIE. What 's gone wrong, Davy?

DAVID. Miss Larondie is going to marry Sir Brice Skene.

EDDIE. Oh, then the solar system is all out of joint! Poor old big brother!

DAVID. I won't feel it, Eddie, I won't feel it.

EDDIE. Yes, you will, Davy. Yes, you will. Why were n't you tumbled into Mars, or Jupiter, or Saturn, or into any world but this?

DAVID. Why?

EDDIE. This is the very worst world that ever spun round for a man who has a heart. Look at all the heartless and stupid people; what a paradise this is for them!

DAVID. I 'll forget her and plunge into my work. There are millions of new worlds to discover.

EDDIE. Yes, but are they all like this? because if they are, what 's the use of discovering millions more of them? Oh, Davy, is n't there one perfect world out of all the millions — just one — where everything goes right, and fiddles never play out of tune?

DAVID. There is n't one, Eddie, not one of all the millions. They 're all alike.

EDDIE. And breaking hearts in all of them? Oh, let 's pretend there 's just one perfect star somewhere, shall we?

DAVID. Oh, very well; let 's pretend there 's one in the nebula of Andromeda. It 's a long way off, and it does no harm to pretend. Besides, it makes the imbroglio of the universe complete if there is one perfect world somewhere in it.

[*Sir Brice enters smoking, throws away his cigarette, looks at David rather insolently, goes into the ballroom.*

DAVID. If he doesn't treat her well — what does it matter? It's all a farce, but if he doesn't treat her well, I feel, Eddie, I could put a murder into the farce, just for fun.

EDDIE. Come home, Davy.

DAVID. Let me be, my boy. It's only a pinprick. I shall get over it.

EDDIE. I wish I could bear it for you, Davy.

DAVID. That would only mean your heart breaking instead of mine.

EDDIE. Don't you think I'd break my heart for you, Davy?

DULCIE (*her voice heard off*). Thanks! I can't wait! Sir Brice is waiting for me!

EDDIE. Poor old big brother!

[*Exit.*

[*Enter Dulcie down the stairs in evening dress, excited, radiant.*

DULCIE (*seeing David*). I thought you'd gone. Did you hear? I'm to be Lady Skene. Do I look nice? (*Very excited.*) I beg your pardon — I don't know what I'm saying. (*Looks round.*) I wish there was a looking-glass here. I wonder where Sir Brice is — I'm to be Lady Skene — won't you congratulate me?

DAVID. I hope you will be happy.

DULCIE. No, congratulate me.

DAVID. I hope you will be happy.

DULCIE. Ah, you think I shan't be happy? Then I will, just to spite you!

DAVID. Ah, do spite me and be happy.

DULCIE (*fidgeting with her dress*). I'm sure my dress isn't right. Wasn't that a jest about the kiss?

DAVID. A great jest.

DULCIE. You would n't have really given two thousand guineas for a kiss from me?

DAVID (*nods*). Why not? Sir Brice gave fifty thousand for the pleasure of losing the Leger.

DULCIE. But he stood to win.

DAVID. So did I.

DULCIE. What?

DAVID. The kiss.

DULCIE. But you would n't really have given two thousand guineas for it?

DAVID (*nods*). I think highly of women. It 's a pleasing delusion of mine. Don't disturb it.

DULCIE (*looking at him, after a little pause*). You are the strangest creature, but what a splendid friend you 'd make! I 'm keeping Sir Brice waiting. (*Turns round, sees that the lace on the skirt of her dress is hanging loose.*) Look at that lace! What can I do? (*Giving him a pin.*) Would you mind pinning that lace on my skirt?

DAVID (*takes the pin, kneels, and pins the lace; unseen by Dulcie, kisses the skirt*). Will that do?

DULCIE. Thank you so much. Do I look nice?

[*He looks up at her imploringly, like a dumb creature; she glances swiftly round to see that they are alone, suddenly bends and kisses him; runs up the ball-room steps. A burst of dance-music.*

CURTAIN

(*Four years pass between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE. *Reception-room at Lady Skene's. A great crowd in farther room. Discover Lady Crandover, Lady Clarice, Charley Wishanger (now Lady Shalford), Montagu, Fancourt, Sharland, and the young men of the first act. Among the guests in farther room Sir Winchmore Wills and the Hon. Percy Blanchflower.*

LADY CRANDOVER. It's astounding.

CHARLEY. What is?

LADY CRANDOVER. The way every one runs after this woman. She's got everybody here again to-night.

LADY CLARICE. Professor Rawkinson and the Bishop of Malmesbury were fighting to get her an ice.

CHARLEY. What is the secret of her popularity?

MONTAGU. Why did you come here to-night?

CHARLEY. I? Oh, I came because everybody else comes. Why did you?

MONTAGU. Because everybody else comes. Do we ever have any other reason for going anywhere, admiring anything, saying anything, or doing anything? The secret of getting a crowd to your room is, "Entice a bell-wether." The flock will follow.

CHARLEY. Who was bell-wether to Lady Skene?

MONTAGU. The old Duchess of Norwich.

LADY CRANDOVER. I suppose the duchess knows all about Lady Skene's antecedents?

MONTAGU. What does it matter about anybody's antecedents to-day?

LADY CRANDOVER. We must draw the line somewhere.

MONTAGU. On the contrary, my dear Lady Crandover, we must *not* draw the line *anywhere*. We have yet got to learn what democracy means.

LADY CLARICE. What does democracy mean?

MONTAGU. That there is no line to be drawn, either socially, morally, pecuniarily, politically, religiously, or anywhere.

LADY CLARICE. How horrid!

MONTAGU (*continuing*). Who are the interesting people here to-night? Of course there's a crowd of respectable nonentities — but who are the attractions? Attraction number one:[1] a financier's wife — the most charming woman in the world — gives the very best dinners in London — had an extensive acquaintance amongst the officers at Aldershot fifteen years ago.

[*The Hon. Percy Blanchflower, a fussy, buzzy, mincing, satirical little creature, with a finicking, feminine manner and gestures, has overheard and comes up to the group.*

BLANCHFLOWER. What's this? — eh? — hum? No scandal, I trust?

MONTAGU. No, Blanchflower; no scandal — only the plain, unvarnished truth about all our friends.

BLANCHFLOWER. Ah, then I'll stay and listen. Go on!

MONTAGU. Attraction number two: leading temperance and social purity orator — can move an audience of ten thousand to tears — leads the loosest of lives — and is suspected of having poisoned his wife.

BLANCHFLOWER. But she had a fearful cockney accent. And he's very kind to his aged aunt and pretty niece — eh? — hum? Give him his due.

MONTAGU. My dear Blanchflower, I'm not blaming the man for poisoning his wife. It may have been a necessity of his position; and if she had a cockney accent, it was a noble thing to do. Attraction number three: pretty little lady who has just emerged triumphantly from the Divorce Court, without a spot upon her pretty little character. Attraction number four —

1 As Montagu enumerates the "attractions," the person he refers to enters and joins the guests.

[*Lady Clarice rejoins the group.*

BLANCHFLOWER (*interrupting*). No! No! Skip number four! We know all about her. Attraction number five. And mind, I shall thoroughly scold you all — when Lushington has got through his list.

MONTAGU (*proceeding*). Attraction number five: impressionist artist, novelist, and general dirty modern dabbler — is consummately clever — a consistent scoundrel in every relation of life — especially to women — a liar, a cheat, and drunkard — and a great personal friend of my own.

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, this is too shocking! This is really too shocking!

LADY CLARICE. You've omitted the chief attraction tonight — our famous astronomer.

MONTAGU. Remon?

BLANCHFLOWER. Of course. Since his great discovery we've only one astronomer in England.

CHARLEY. What was his great discovery?

BLANCHFLOWER. Don't know. Some new spots on Venus, I believe.

MONTAGU. No. That she wanted a new belt to hide the manners of her inhabitants, which were distinctly visible through his new large telescope, and if constantly observed, would tend to the corruption of London society.

BLANCHFLOWER. You naughty person! You're not to look through that telescope!

MONTAGU. My dear Blanchflower, I have; and I assure you we have nothing to fear. But I tremble for the morals of Venus if they get a telescope as large as Remon's and begin to look at us.

BLANCHFLOWER. Tell me, this friendship of the astronomer with Lady Skene — eh? hum? — quite innocent — eh?

MONTAGU. I have never known any friendship between a man and a married woman that was not innocent.

How can it be otherwise, unless the woman is ugly?

LADY CLARICE. Poor dear Lady Skene is fearfully ill-used, I hear.

(*Sir Winchmore Wills, a fashionable middle-aged physician, has come up and joined the group.*)

I've heard that Sir Brice gets drunk and — then — dreadful things happen.

BLANCHFLOWER. But that can't be true — eh? hum? — Sir Winchmore — eh?

SIR WINCHMORE. I have never treated Sir Brice for alcoholism, nor Lady Skene for bruises.

BLANCHFLOWER. No, of course, no — but you've heard — hum? eh?

SIR WINCHMORE. Singularly enough, I have never heard or seen anything in the least discreditable to any one of my patients.

[*Eddie enters and talks to guests.*

CHARLEY. I know for a fact Sir Brice came a terrific cropper last week at Epsom, and does n't know how he stands.

[*Eddie is listening attentively.*

BLANCHFLOWER. And — hum — the astronomer — hum? eh? hum? — is there any truth — eh?

MONTAGU. Well, we *know* that our astronomer succeeded a few months ago to an immense fortune left him by a mountaineering friend in Canada. We *know* that Sir Brice neglects his wife and is practically ruined. We *know* that Lady Skene continues her parties, her household, her carriages, and we *know* that our astronomer pays (*Pause*) the greatest attention to Lady Skene. Of course, this does n't absolutely prove Lady Skene's guilt — yet why should we deprive ourselves of the pleasure of believing and circulating a spicy story about our friends merely because there is only the very slightest foundation for it?

[*Eddie rises rather indignantly and comes a little nearer to the group without being noticed by them.*

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, this is very naughty of us. We are actually talking scandal about our hostess. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves!

LADY CRANDOVER. Really, it's time somebody made a stand, or society will be ruined. Here is a woman who was actually a barmaid at a public-house — her name is in everybody's mouth in connection with this astronomer, and yet —

MONTAGU. And yet we crush to her receptions. At least you do, Lady Crandover.

LADY CRANDOVER. Oh, we are all to blame for lowering the moral tone of society as we are doing.

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, my dear Lady Crandover, please, please, please, do not make things unpleasant by dragging in morality. But where is the astronomer? — eh? hum?

EDDIE. My brother will be coming by-and-bye. I'll tell him he's wanted here.

[*Exit Eddie.*

[*Blanchflower looks aghast and stares round at all the rest, who show some slight discomfiture. Fancourt and Sharland join the group.*

BLANCHFLOWER. Dear me! That's the astronomer's brother. Have we said anything? — hum? eh?

MONTAGU. My dear Blanchflower, what does it matter what lies we tell about each other when none of our friends think any the worse of us if they are true!

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, but it's very wrong to tell lies, very wrong indeed. I've not seen Sir Brice to-night. Where is he? eh?

FANCOURT. Bricey doesn't generally stay very long at his wife's receptions.

SHARLAND. Bricey's latest little hobby is teaching the girls at the Folly Theatre to box.

FANCOURT. Yes. Last Tuesday he was in great force at the Ducks and Drakes Club, egging on Betty Vignette to fight Sylvia Vernon.

SHARLAND. Oh, that's coming off — two hundred a side, on Sunday night week.

FANCOURT (*cautiously winking at Sharland, in a warning way*). I say, old chap, keep it quiet. I wonder where Bricey is to-night.

MONTAGU. What does it matter whether he is playing baccarat with the pot-boy at the corner, or clandestinely taking his nurse-girl to the Alhambra on the pretence that it is a missionary meeting? We may be quite sure that Bricey is doing something equally vicious, stupid, disreputable, and — original.

CHARLEY (*to Monty*). Come here, you monster. Have you heard the news?

[*During the conversation of Charley and Monty the other group put their heads together and whisper.*

MONTAGU. What?

CHARLEY. Sir Joseph is going to leave the Marchmoore estates to Clarice.

MONTAGU (*glancing at Lady Clarice*). Sure?

CHARLEY. Fact. The will is to be signed in a few days. Clarice told me so in confidence.

MONTAGU. Thanks.

[*He strolls cautiously up to Lady Clarice, hovers about her till he gets a chance of speaking to her. A general laugh from the group.*

BLANCHFLOWER (*who has been in centre of group*). Oh, this is very shocking! We are actually talking scandal about our host. And he has his good points. He has n't strangled his baby, has he, Sir Winchmore?

SIR WINCHMORE. Sir Brice has the greatest consideration for the welfare of his offspring. (*Dulcie comes from the other room magnificently dressed, restless, pale, nervous, excited.*) He never goes near it.

[*An awkward little pause as they see Dulcie. Lady Clarice goes up to her.*

LADY CLARICE. What a lot of interesting folks you always have, dear. Who is that lady in pale blue?

DULCIE. Mrs. Chalmers.

LADY CLARICE. The lady who has figured so much in the newspapers lately? What a singular gift you have of attracting all sorts of people, dear.

DULCIE. Have I? That 's sometimes a misfortune.

LADY CLARICE. Yes, it does involve one in undesirable acquaintances and relationships.

DULCIE. Still, it must be rather annoying to be without it.

[*Goes restlessly to Sir Winchmore. Lady Clarice shows slight mortification. Monty, who has been watching the scene, goes up to her.*

MONTAGU. Lady Clarice, let me give you some supper.

DULCIE (*taking Sir Winchmore a little aside*). Sir Winchmore — so kind of you to come. (*In a half whisper.*) That sleeping draught 's no use — you must send me a stronger one.

SIR WINCHMORE (*shakes his head*). Lady Skene —

DULCIE (*impetuously*). Yes, yes, please — I must have it — I 've not slept for three nights.

SIR WINCHMORE. Lady Skene, let me beg you —

DULCIE. No, no, no — you must patch me up and keep me going somehow till the end of the season; then you shall do what you like with me.

SIR WINCHMORE. But, Lady Skene —

DULCIE (*intense suppressed nervousness*). But — (*imploringly.*) Oh, don't contradict me. — When any one speaks to me I feel I must shriek out, "Yah, yah, yah!"

(*Blanchflower has overheard the last speech. Dulcie sees that Blanchflower is looking at her, controls herself after an immense effort, puts on society smile. To Blanchflower.*)

The bishop was talking to me just now about his mission to convert the West End of London, and I could scarcely keep from shrieking out to him, "Yah, yah, yah!" Is n't it strange?

BLANCHFLOWER. Not at all. Clergymen always produce that effect upon me.

DULCIE (*turning to Sir Winchmore*). Sir Winchmore, you 'll run up to the nursery and see Rosy before you go, won't you?

SIR WINCHMORE. What 's the matter?

DULCIE. Nothing, only a little tumble and a bruise. My sister Nell is with her, but you 'll just see her?

SIR WINCHMORE. Certainly.

DULCIE. I 'm so foolish about her. (*Imploringly.*) She is strong and healthy, is n't she?

SIR WINCHMORE. A magnificent child.

[*Sir Brice has entered through other room. He looks coarser and more dissipated than in first act, and is more brutalised. There is a slight movement of all the guests away from him. Sharland enters.*

DULCIE (*not seeing Sir Brice — to Sir Winchmore*). Really? Really?

SIR WINCHMORE. Really. Sir Brice and you may well be proud of her.

(*Sir Brice's entrance has caused an awkward pause amongst the guests.*)

We were talking of your youthful daughter, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. I hate brats.

[*Another awkward pause.*

DULCIE (*to cover it, rattles away with forced gaiety*). We shall see you at Ascot, of course, Mr. Blanchflower. — Sir Winchmore, what are these frightful new waters that you are sending all your patients to? — That reminds me, Lady Shalford, how is Sir Digby's gout?

[*Slight continued movement of the guests away from Sir Brice.*

CHARLEY. Terrible. I pack him off to Aix on Thursday.

DULCIE (*same tone*). So sorry he couldn't come to-night.

CHARLEY. My dear, I 'm very glad, and so I 'm sure is everybody who knows him. If Aix does n't cure him, I shall try something drastic.

SIR BRICE. Serve him as I did my trainer Burstow.

DULCIE (*noticing the guests' repulsion, slightly frowns at Sir Brice unobserved by the guests, and goes on speaking to change the subject*). We shall go to Homburg again—

SIR BRICE (*speaks her down—to Charley*). Burstow had the gout. I treated him myself. (*Coarse little chuckle.*) I gave him a bottle of port, champagne at intervals, and brown brandy *ad lib.* A tombstone now marks Burstow's precise position, which is longitudinal. I wrote his epitaph, but the vicar wouldn't pass it. So the vicar and I have a law-suit on.

[*Another coarse chuckle. Another awkward pause.*

DULCIE (*to cover it, continues*). Mr. Fancourt, did you make inquiries about the house-boat for us?

SIR BRICE. We shan't go to Henley.

DULCIE (*to Fancourt*). Then of course you needn't make inquiries.

FANCOURT. But I've arranged it. My brother will be awfully delighted if you'll accept the loan of his for the Henley week. You and Sir Brice will be awfully pleased with it.

SIR BRICE (*more decidedly*). We shall not go to Henley.

DULCIE (*another covert frown at Sir Brice; again controlling herself with immense effort and speaking very calmly*). Will you thank your brother and say we shall not be going.

[*Awkward pause. Sir Brice puts his hands in his pockets and yawns. Dulcie engages the group in conversation, and they crowd round her.*

SIR BRICE. Percy, come and have a little game of poker in the smoking-room.

SHARLAND. Very sorry, Bricey, haven't so much as a fiver with me.

SIR BRICE. You can borrow. Can't you borrow, eh?

SHARLAND. Very sorry, dear old chap; never borrow or lend.

[*Exit Sharland. Sir Brice stands and yawns, looks sulky and vicious, then calls out.*

SIR BRICE. Fancourt. (*Fancourt glances up but does not come.*) Fan — Fan, I say — (*At length Fancourt comes.*) We 're getting up a little hand at poker just to wind up this infernally dull evening.

FANCOURT (*shakes his head and laughs*). Not good enough, Bricey — not good enough.

[*David Remon enters. At his entrance guests show marked interest, and the conversation stops. Sir Brice watches with a sulky expression. Dulcie shows great pleasure, goes to meet David.*

DULCIE. I 'm so glad you 've come. You have so many engagements.

[*Shakes hands.*

DAVID. None more pleasing than this.

BLANCHFLOWER. I insist on knowing Mr. Remon — somebody introduce me — introduce me.

DULCIE. Mr. Remon — Mr. Percy Blanchflower.

BLANCHFLOWER. I 'm so delighted to know you. We want to look at Venus through that large telescope of yours.

DAVID. It 's in the South of France.

BLANCHFLOWER. I go there every winter. We were talking about your wonderful discoveries — hum? eh? We want to know all about them.

DAVID. Oh, spare me, or rather yourselves.

[*Sir Brice laughs.*

FANCOURT. You seem to have got something good all to yourself, Bricey.

SIR BRICE. Yes, I have.

[*Laughs.*

BLANCHFLOWER (*aside, to Sir Winchmore*). What is Remon's discovery? eh?

SIR WINCHMORE. Have n't the least idea — something about Saturn, I fancy.

BLANCHFLOWER (*buzzes up to Remon*). Your last dis-

covery now — about Saturn, was n't it — hum? eh? [*All through David's conversation with the guests, he maintains the same light, frivolous tone, and speaks without the least suggestion of seriousness. This gives a contrast to the scenes with Dulcie.*

DAVID (*amused, very light and chaffing tone*). About Saturn? Oh yes. My conjecture is that bad folks when they die are sent to Saturn to study current theology, and if at the end of five hundred years they know anything about it, their probation is complete.

[*General laugh. David turns to group. Sir Brice laughs.*

FANCOURT. What is it, Bricey?

SIR BRICE. Lady Skene is making a howling fuss with all of you to-night. She 'll make a howling fuss of another kind next week. I can't stand that astronomer fellow.

BLANCHFLOWER. But do tell us, Lady Skene, what is Mr. Remon's great speciality — hum? eh?

DULCIE. I believe Mr. Remon has devoted a great deal of time to the study of sun-spots.

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh — ah, yes — hum. Now (*to David*) what is the special function of sun-spots — hum? eh? What do they do?

DAVID (*still amused, chaffing, mysterious*). I 've long had a suspicion that there is a very subtle connection between sun-spots and politics — in fact, I am convinced that the present decadence of political manners and morals is entirely caused by the persistence of a certain sun-spot. As soon as we can remove it, the natural ingrained honesty and patriotism of our politicians will reassert themselves.

[*General laugh.*

SIR BRICE (*pushes a little forward with a rather insolent manner, to David*). My character is always puzzling me. Can you tell me whether its present development is due to sun-spots?

DAVID (*is about to reply rather angrily; is checked by a look from Dulcie; speaks very politely*). You might not think me polite, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE (*persisting*). I should like to have a scientific examination made of my character.

DAVID (*still controlling himself*). I fear I should not make a sympathetic operator.

SIR BRICE (*still persisting*). But —

DULCIE (*who has been watching very apprehensively, to Sir Brice*). My dear, Lady Franklin wants to ask you something about a horse for Ascot. She was here a moment ago.

(*Looking around, drawing Sir Brice away from the group, who close up round Remon. Dulcie is getting Sir Brice away.*)

For God's sake keep away from us!

(*A guest is just passing; Dulcie turns to her with a forced society smile and manner.*)

How do you do? What a sweet frock!

[*Shakes hands with guest, who passes on.*

SIR BRICE (*sulkily*). What 's the matter?

[*Approaches her.*

DULCIE. Don't go near any one. You smell of brandy.

[*All this under her breath, with great terror and apprehension.*

SIR BRICE (*getting a little nearer her*). I rather like the smell of brandy.

DULCIE (*terrified, under her breath*). Keep away — keep away — if you come a step nearer I shall shriek out before everybody. You nearly drove me out of my mind this morning. Oh, for Heaven's sake — do go — do go!

SIR BRICE. Well, as it 's infernally slow here I will go — but — you may as well know, there will be no Ascot, no Henley, no Goodwood, no Homburg, no anything. We shall be sold up within a month.

(*Dulcie is staggered for a moment.*)

Ta ta — my blessing — I 'm going to the Club.

[*Exit Sir Brice. Dulcie stands overwhelmed for a moment, tries to pull herself together, staggers a little. David, who has been watching her and Sir Brice, leaves the group and comes to her, speaks with great feeling, very softly, his tone and manner to her in great contrast to his tone and manner with the guests.*

DAVID. Lady Skene, you are in trouble — you are ill.

DULCIE (*again with the forced society smile*). No, only the fatigue of the season, and the rooms are so crowded, aren't they?

[*A group of guests begin little gestures and significant glances and whispers, watching David and Dulcie.*

[*Eddie re-enters, and, unnoticed, looks from one group to the other.*

DAVID. I'll tell Sir Winchmore.

DULCIE. No, don't take any notice. If I can only get through this evening! (*With a sudden instinct, appealing to him with great entreaty.*) Tell me something that will carry me through this next hour till they have all gone. Give me that sort of medicine!

DAVID (*with the utmost tenderness and feeling, in a low voice, bending over her. The glances and whispers continued*). Your trouble is n't real. This society world of yours is n't a real world. There 's one little star in Andromeda where everything is real. You 've wandered down here amongst these shadows when you should have stayed at home.

DULCIE (*pleased, lending herself to his suggestions*). Aren't these real men and women?

DAVID. No. They are only masquerading. Good God, I think we are all masquerading! Look at them! If you touched them with reality they would vanish. And so with your trouble of to-night. Fly back to Andromeda, and you will see what a dream all this is.

DULCIE. How strange! I was half dead a moment ago, and you 've made me so well and happy. But you — do you belong to Andromeda — or to this world?

[*Eddie has been watching and comes down near to them.*

DAVID. To both. But the little star in Andromeda is my home. I'm only wandering with you amongst these phantoms.

[*They have become for the moment quite absorbed. Eddie, who has been watching the whispers and smiles, comes up to them, speaks rather sharply.*

EDDIE. Lady Skene — that lamp-shade — (*pointing off*) won't it catch fire?

(*Taking David's arm, dragging him away.*) I want to talk to you, Davy.

[*Dulcie turns to man-servant, points to the lamp-shade, and gives him directions concerning it.*

DAVID (*turns savagely on Eddie, growls*). Why the devil did you come between us?

EDDIE. Don't you care for her, Davy?

DAVID. Care for her?

[*Dulcie, having given man-servant instructions, goes to guests.*

EDDIE. Do you know what these folks are saying? That Sir Brice is ruined, and that you have lately come into a fortune.

DAVID. Well?

EDDIE. And that she continues her parties, her dresses, her house, because you —

(*Stops, looks at him. David looks around at guests savagely. Stands for a moment or two reflecting; his face then assumes a look of great resolve. Eddie watches him.*) I was right to tell you, Davy?

DAVID (*shakes Eddie's hand in reply. Another little pause.*) Go and tell her, Eddie, that I must see her for a few minutes by-and-bye — to-night — when everybody is gone.

EDDIE. What are you going to do, Davy?

DAVID. We'll get away south to-morrow, old boy. The observatory's nearly finished, and — there's no tittle-

tattle between the snows and the stars. Go and tell her I must see her, and bring me back her answer.

EDDIE (*going up to Dulcie*). You've not been down to supper, Lady Skene.

DULCIE. I really don't want any.

EDDIE. But I've a message for you.

DULCIE. A message?

EDDIE. From Andromeda.

[*Exeunt Dulcie and Eddie.*

LADY CLARICE. You are really too dreadful.

BLANCHFLOWER (*buzzing round Remon*). That's a charming theory of yours about the effect of sun-spots on morality.

DAVID. Yes. It isn't true, but it's very consoling. That's why I invented it.

MONTAGU. If it's charming and consoling, why should it be true?

DAVID. Why should it? and put everything else out of focus.

BLANCHFLOWER. Out of focus! Ah! I'm afraid you're a dreadful, dreadful pessimist.

DAVID. No; but I'm as willing to play that part as any other, since it's only in jest.

CHARLEY. In jest? What do you mean?

DAVID. I have to spend so much time alone amongst the stars, that when I come back into the world I am quite at a loss. I find myself amongst crowds of shadows — very charming shadows they are — playing at money-making, playing at religion, playing at love, at art, at politics, at all sorts of odd games; and so for the time, I join in the game, and pretend to take an interest in it; and a very pleasant game it is, so long as we don't mistake it for reality.

CHARLEY. But surely we are realities!

DAVID. With the profoundest respect in the world, Lady Shalford, I cannot bring myself to believe that you are. Still, I won't spoil your game by staying out.

BLANCHFLOWER (*with a little affected, mincing earnestness*). Oh, but surely, surely there is Something real Somewhere. Oh, yes — surely, surely — we must believe that there is — hum? eh? — a Kind of — eh? — a Sort of a Something — Somewhere, eh?

DAVID. If you like to believe there is a kind of a sort of a something — somewhere — and you find it consoling, I'm as willing to pretend to believe that as anything else.

BLANCHFLOWER (*still with the same affected earnestness*). Oh, but surely, when you look into your own heart — hum? eh?

DAVID. I always wear a mask over my heart. I never dare look into it.

MONTAGU. I find this world a remarkably comfortable and well-arranged place. I always do exactly as I like. If I want anything, I buy it, whether I pay for it or no. If I see a woman I admire, I make love to her, whether she belongs to another man or no. If a lie will answer my purpose, I tell it. I can't remember I ever denied myself one single pleasure in life; nor have I ever put myself out to oblige a fellow-creature. I am consistently selfish and I find it pays; I credit everybody else with the same consistent selfishness, and I am never deceived in my estimate of character. These are my principles, and I always act up to them. And I assure you I find this world the pleasantest possible place.

DAVID. A fairy palace! An enchanted spot! Only take care! While you are dancing, there may be a volcano underneath.

MONTAGU. If there is, surely dancing is the pleasantest preparation for the general burst-up.

[*Eddie enters.*

EDDIE. Davy —

DAVID (*goes to him*). Well?

EDDIE. She'll see you to-night. Come back here when they're all gone.

BLANCHFLOWER (*to Montagu*). How charmingly frank you are, Monty.

MONTAGU. Why not? We have one supreme merit in this generation — we have ceased to render to virtue the homage of hypocrisy.

DAVID. And our moral evolution is now complete. Good-night!

[*Exeunt David and Eddie.*

MONTAGU (*coming down with Lady Clarice*). Of course, I know there is something wretchedly philistine and provincial about marriage, but I will take care this aspect of it is never presented to you.

LADY CLARICE. I wonder what makes marriage so unlovely and so uninteresting?

MONTAGU. The exaggerated notion that prevails of its duties and responsibilities. Once do away with that, and it becomes an ideal state. Lady Clarice, you'd find me the most agreeable partner in the world.

LADY CLARICE. You'd be like most other husbands, I suppose.

MONTAGU. No; I should be unique. Husbands, as a rule, are foolish, jealous brutes, who insist that men shall have all the rights and women all the duties — men shall have all the sweets and women all the sours of the marriage state. We would start on an entirely new plan. The sours we would naturally equally avoid, and the sweets — if there are any — we would naturally do our best to secure.

LADY CLARICE. Separately, or together?

MONTAGU. According to our tastes. If you do me the honour to accept me, I pledge you my word I will never have the offensively bad taste to speak of a husband's rights. There shall be no "lord and master" nonsense.

LADY CLARICE. It sounds very well in theory. I wonder how it would work.

MONTAGU. Let us try. If we succeed we shall solve the vexed question of the age, and make ourselves happy in showing mankind the road to happiness.

LADY CLARICE. But if we fail?

MONTAGU. We shall have sacrificed ourselves for the benefit of our species. But we can't fail; the plan is perfect.

LADY CLARICE. If I spoke of rights and duties — if I were jealous —

MONTAGU. Ah! then you would be departing from the plan. Its charm is that it is a patent, self-adjusting, self-repairing, safety-valve plan, with double escapement action suited to all climates and dispositions. No rights, no duties, no self-assertion, no quarrels, no jealousy.

LADY CLARICE. And no love?

MONTAGU. Love is a perverted animal instinct, which is really a great bar to solid happiness in marriage. Believe me, you will like me and respect me in the end for not pretending to any such outworn impulses. You see I am frank.

LADY CLARICE. You are indeed. (*Looking at him very closely, watching him.*) You know — (*pause*) — my father cannot make any great settlements, and — (*watching him closely*) I have no expectations.

MONTAGU (*stands it without flinching*). So I am aware. I 'm frightfully in debt, and I have no expectations. But there is a house in Grosvenor Place — it would suit us exactly.

LADY CLARICE (*watching him*). But — without money?

MONTAGU. I cannot afford to be economical. I have acted on that principle throughout life, and I have always had the very best of everything. I do not see that we need change it.

LADY CLARICE. You are perfectly atrocious — I don't care for you in the least.

MONTAGU (*with great politeness*). My plan is precisely adapted to such cases.

[*Enter Carter and Lady Crandover.*

LADY CRANDOVER. Come, Clarice — everybody is going.

[*Exit Lady Crandover.*

MONTAGU. I shall call on Lord Crandover to-morrow. You don't speak. Does silence give consent?

LADY CLARICE. I can't help your calling.

[*Exit Clarice. Monty stands in slight deliberation. Charley comes out from the conservatory behind him. She has been watching the last part of the scene from the conservatory.*

CHARLEY. Well?

MONTAGU. Landed, I think. You're sure about Sir Joseph and the estate?

CHARLEY. Quite. But it's not to be known yet. I'm a pet, ain't I?

MONTAGU. You are.

[*Kisses her hand.*

CHARLEY. I must be going. That creature at home will be raising furies.

MONTAGU. When do you pack him to Aix?

CHARLEY. Thursday, praise the Lord!

MONTAGU. When shall I call?

CHARLEY. Friday?

MONTAGU. What time?

CHARLEY. Come to lunch?

MONTAGU. Yes.

CHARLEY. Friday at two. (*They exchange looks full of meaning.*) Bye-bye.

MONTAGU. Bye-bye.

[*Dulcie enters. Charley hurriedly drops Monty's hand and goes up to Dulcie.*

CHARLEY. Oh dear, am I the last? Good-bye, dear. (*Kisses Dulcie.*) Monty, come and see me to my carriage.

MONTAGU. Good-bye, Lady Skene.

DULCIE. Good-bye.

[*Exit Montagu with Charley.*

DULCIE (*to servant*). Thomson, I expect Mr. Remon. Show him in here.

SERVANT. Yes, my lady.

[*Exit. Helen appears at door, still in nurse's costume.*

HELEN (*peeps in*). They have all gone, dear.

DULCIE. I've got such a fever, Nell. Put your nice cold hand on my forehead. That's right. Hold it tight — tight. Why didn't you dress and come to my party?

HELEN. I was so tried and bored at the last, and I wanted to be with Rosy.

DULCIE. She's all right?

HELEN. Yes. She was awake a moment ago.

DULCIE (*suddenly*). Fetch her! I must see her! Oh, you're right, Nell; it's been a hateful evening, with only one bright spot in it — when he came and whispered something so sweet.

HELEN (*suddenly*). Dulcie, you're sure of yourself?

DULCIE. I'm sure of him.

HELEN. He has never spoken — of — of —

DULCIE. Of love? Never. What does that matter? I know he loves me.

HELEN. Dulcie, you shouldn't say that — even to yourself.

DULCIE. Oh, that's all nonsense, Nell; as if there was ever a woman in this world that didn't know when she was loved!

HELEN. Dulcie!

DULCIE (*provokingly*). He loves me! He loves me! He loves me, and I'm not ashamed of it, and I don't care who knows it. (*Throwing her arms round Helen's neck.*) Nell, I'm so happy.

HELEN. Why?

DULCIE. He's coming, he's coming. Brice says we are utterly ruined. We're ruined, but I won't feel it

to-night. I'll feel it to-morrow. I'll be happy for one minute to-night. He is coming.

HELEN. Mr. Remon?

DULCIE. Yes. Don't look shocked, Nell. Listen; this is true. Mr. Remon and I have never said one word to each other that all the world might not have heard. (*Pause.*) I'm glad all the world has n't heard it though.

[*Thomson comes in, announces Mr. Remon.*

DULCIE (*to Helen*). Go and fetch Rosy. Yes! Yes! (*Exit Helen. David has entered; Servant has gone off.*)

(*To David.*) I'm so glad you've come. I want you to see Rosy. She's awake. You've never seen her.

[*All this very excited.*

DAVID. I shall be very pleased.

[*Looks at her.*

DULCIE. You're thinking about me.

DAVID. I was thinking that a mother is the most beautiful thing on earth.

DULCIE. Oh, you don't know! You can't imagine! She's over two years old, and I have n't got over remembering that she's mine. Every time I think of her I feel a little catch here in the very middle of my heart, a delicious little stab, as if some angel came behind me and whispered to me, "God has made you a present of ten hundred thousand million pounds all your own." Oh, she makes up to me for everything.

[*David is approaching her with great tenderness when Helen enters with Rosy, the two-year-old baby, in her arms, in nightclothes.*

DULCIE (*rushes to Helen*). There! There! You may look at her!

HELEN. Hush! She's asleep!

DULCIE. I must kiss her if it kills her! (*Hugs the baby, kisses her, lifts the nightgown, kisses the baby's feet, croons over her — points her finger mockingly at*

Remon in childlike mockery and laughter.) There! There! There, Mr. Philosopher from Andromeda! You can't say a mother's love is n't real!

DAVID. I never did. It 's the one thing that shows what a sham the rest of the world is. That little star in Andromeda is crowded with mothers. They 've all been there once in their lives.

[*Bends over the baby for a moment.*

DULCIE (*excited, feverish*). Nell, Mr. Remon has an odd notion that this world is n't real.

HELEN. The cure for that is to earn half-a-crown a day and live on it.

DAVID. Oh yes, I know. Work is real.

[*Bends over the baby.*

DULCIE (*to David*). What are you looking at? (*Scrutinises him carefully; then suddenly, with savage earnestness, half despair, half entreaty.*) She's like *me?* She 's like *me!!* (*Crescendo, tigerish, frenzied.*) Say she 's like *me!!!*

DAVID (*very quietly*). She is like *you.* (*Kisses the child reverently.*) She is wholly like *you!*

DULCIE (*stands absorbed, very quietly*). Take her back again to the nursery, Nell.

HELEN. Good-night, Mr. Remon.

DAVID. Good-night.

[*Goes toward the door with her.*

HELEN (*to David, smiling*). I've just remembered something else that is real.

DAVID. What's that?

HELEN. Duty.

[*Exit Helen with baby. A summer sunrise shines pink through the conservatory, and lights up the room with summer morning light. David returns to Dulcie, who sits absorbed.*

DAVID. Lady Skene, I asked to see you because — it is necessary for me to leave England very soon.

DULCIE. No — no!

DAVID. Yes — yes. I never use the word "honour" about my conduct, because every scamp has used it until it's the most counterfeit word in the language. But I've just learned that, if I stay in England, I shall injure very deeply a friend of mine, so naturally I'm going away.

DULCIE. But — tell me — (*pause*) — what —

DAVID. If I stay, I cannot continue an honest man. Will you let it rest there?

DULCIE. If you wish —

DAVID (*after a little pause, with some embarrassment*). I have just heard — I scarcely know how to mention it — that you may be placed in a position of some difficulty.

DULCIE. You mean that Sir Brice is ruined. In one way it's a relief, because at any rate it will break up this life, and I'm so tired of it.

DAVID. Yet you thought you would like it on that night of the Hunt Ball.

DULCIE. Yes. I longed for it. Is life like that all through?

DAVID. Like what?

DULCIE. To long for a thing very much and to find it worthless, and then to long for something else much more — to be sure that this is worth having — to get it, and then to find that that is worthless too. And so on, and so on, and so on?

DAVID. I'm afraid life is very much like that on this particular planet.

DULCIE. Oh, but that would be awful if I found out that —

[*Stops.*

DAVID. What?

DULCIE. Nothing. You remember that night of the Hunt Ball?

DAVID (*nods*). It was the last time I saw my friend George Copeland. He died in Alaska six months after.

DULCIE. And you went away for over a year.

DAVID. No — only for a few weeks. After Copeland's funeral I went to the Mediterranean to choose a site for my observatory, and I was back in England within less than three months.

DULCIE. But we never saw you till last season. Where were you?

DAVID. When you were in the country, I was there; when you were in town, I was in town too. I have never been far away from you. I have kept an account of every time I have seen you for the last three years.

DULCIE (*looks at him as if suddenly struck with a thought*). Tell me — where were you two years ago last March?

DAVID. At Gerard's Heath — near you.

DULCIE (*suddenly*). Did you — the night Rosy was — I mean the night of the second — it was a dreadful snowstorm —

DAVID. I remember.

DULCIE. One of my nurses said she saw some one in the garden.

[*Looks at him.*

DAVID. It was I. Your life was in danger. I passed those two nights outside your window.

[*Dulcie, with great affection, involuntarily puts her hand on his arm. He raises her hand and is about to kiss it. Helen re-enters. David rises.*

HELEN. Sir Brice has just come back and is in the smoking-room downstairs.

DULCIE (*turning*). Look! It's morning.

DAVID. Good-bye.

DULCIE (*suddenly*). No — I must have another word with you. Wait here a moment. Here is Sir Brice. Nell, take Mr. Remon on to the balcony for a minute or two and wait there with him till Sir Brice has gone upstairs.

[*Exeunt David and Helen through conservatory and on to balcony.*

[*Sir Brice enters, looking a little flushed and dissipated.*

SIR BRICE (*staring at Dulcie; after a pause*). Well?

DULCIE. Well?

SIR BRICE (*drops into a chair; whistles*). Got rid of your friends?

DULCIE. All except Mr. Remon. He's on the balcony with Nell.

SIR BRICE. Oh!

(*Pause. Whistles; takes some change out of his pocket — three shillings and threepence; places the coins very carefully and elaborately in a longitudinal position on the palm of his left hand, arranging the three shillings and the three pennies in a line, whistling carelessly.*)

That's our net fortune, my girl. (*Holding them up under her face.*) That is our precise capital — three shillings and threepence. (*Whistles.*) Not another farthing. And some thousand pounds' worth of debts.

DULCIE (*unconcerned*). Indeed.

SIR BRICE (*with a sudden little burst of brutality — not too marked*). Look here! can't you get some money?

DULCIE. What do you mean?

SIR BRICE. *Get some money!* That's plain English, is n't it?

DULCIE. I don't understand you.

SIR BRICE. This fellow Remon is devilish fond of you. Can't you get some money from him?

DULCIE. Hush! Borrow money from him!

SIR BRICE (*suggestively*). You need n't borrow. (*Dulcie looks at him inquiringly.*) Now can't you get some?

[*Dulcie looks at him for a moment; she raises her fan to strike him; sees David, who has entered from conservatory. Helen stands at conservatory door.*

DAVID. Lady Skene, I have been obliged to overhear

what has just been said. To-morrow morning I leave for the South of France, and I shall be quite inaccessible for some years. My bankers will have orders to send you a cheque-book and to honour your signature to any extent that you are likely to require. (*Dulcie makes a protest.*) If you please — if you please. As I shall be away from England, there cannot be the least slur upon you in accepting it. Miss Larondie, you will be with your sister, always. She will be in your care — always. (*Shakes hands with Helen.*) Be very kind to her. Never leave her. Good-bye.

DULCIE. But I — cannot — take —

DAVID (*silencing her*). If you please — It is my last request. Good-bye.

[*Sir Brice, who has been sitting all the while, listening, rises.*

DAVID (*looks at him for just half a moment; looks at Dulcie*). Good-bye.

[*Exit David.*

CURTAIN

(*Nine months pass between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE. *Private sitting-room at the Hôtel Prince De Galles, Nice. A rather handsome modern room furnished in French hotel fashion. Two long windows, right, curtained. Door at back. Door left. Small card table down stage, left, with several packs of cards loosely on it. The whole floor round the table strewn with cards.*

[*Discover Sir Brice in evening dress seated left of table, aimlessly and mechanically playing with the cards. After a few seconds Dulcie, in dinner dress, enters from door at back, crosses to the window, and stands looking out, having taken no notice of Sir Brice. As she enters he leaves off playing with the cards for a moment, looks at her.*

SIR BRICE (*in rather a commanding tone, a little brutal*). Come here.

(*Dulcie takes no notice. A little pause. Louder.*) D' ye hear? Come here.

(*Dulcie comes down to him, does not speak. He looks up at her. Her face is quite blank, looking indifferently in front of her. He begins playing with cards again.*

I've lost over six hundred pounds.

(*Dulcie takes no notice. Dashes the pack of cards under his feet, stamps on them.*) Damn and *damn* the cards!

(*Dulcie takes no notice. Slight pause. Roars out.*) The hotel people have sent up their bill again with a request for payment.

(*Slight pause. Dulcie goes back to the window, stands there looking out. Sir Brice roars out furiously.*) Why the devil don't you get something for that deaf-

ness of yours! (*Suddenly jumps up, goes to her, seizes her hands, turns her round.*) Now look here — (*Hotel Servant enters, with letter on tray. Sir Brice desists. The Hotel Servant brings the letter to Dulcie, who crosses and takes it. Exit Servant. Dulcie opens letter, reads it.*)

Well? (*Dulcie rings bell.*) Well?

[*Servant enters.*

DULCIE (*in cold equable tone, to Sir Brice*). Mr. Edward Remon wishes to see me. He asks me to excuse his being in fancy dress. He's going to the Opera Ball. Shall I see him here or in the hall?

SIR BRICE. Here.

DULCIE (*to Servant*). Show Mr. Remon here.

[*Exit Servant.*

SIR BRICE (*to Dulcie*). Where's his brother, the astronomer?

DULCIE. At his observatory, I suppose. I've not seen him since the night we began to live upon him.

[*Hotel Servant opens door, announces Mr. Edward Remon. Eddie enters, dressed as Pierrot for the fancy-dress ball. Exit Servant.*

EDDIE (*all through the act very excitedly*). How d'ye do? (*To Dulcie; shakes hands with her. To Sir Brice.*) How d'ye do?

SIR BRICE. How d'ye do?

[*Looks meaningly at Dulcie and exit.*

EDDIE. So good of you to excuse this dress.

DULCIE. Your brother?

EDDIE. He's down in the town with me to-night. We've been dining at the Café de Paris. I've taken three glasses of champagne — anything more than a spoonful makes me tipsy; so, with that and this dress, and our journey to Africa, I'm quite mad to-night.

DULCIE. Africa!

EDDIE. We start early to-morrow morning to the deadliest place on the West Coast.

DULCIE. Not your brother?

EDDIE. Yes. We 're going to watch the transit of Venus, and as there was a jolly lot of fever there all the other astronomers rather funked it. So Davy has fitted out an expedition himself. (*Dulcie shows great concern. Eddie rattles on.*) I 'm going to have a spree to-night. I 've never been drunk in my life, and I thought I should like to try what it 's like — because — (*tossing up a coin*) it 's heads we come back alive and prove Davy's theory about sun-spots — and it 's tails we leave our bones and all our apparatus out there. It 's tails — we 're as dead as door-nails. (*Sees Dulcie's pained face.*) Lady Skene — I 'm so sorry —

DULCIE. We 've been three weeks in Nice. Why has n't your brother come to see me?

EDDIE. A mistaken sense of duty. Davy has the oddest notions about duty. He thinks one ought to do it when it 's unpleasant. So do I when I 'm in my right clothes, and my right senses, but now I 'm half tipsy, and have got a fool's cap on, I can see quite plainly that duty 's all moonshine. Duty is doing exactly what one likes, and it 's Davy's duty to come to you. And the fool is just breaking his heart for a sight of you. Shall I find him and bring him?

DULCIE. Where is he?

EDDIE. He 's in the town getting everybody ready for to-morrow. Shall I find him?

DULCIE (*looking at her watch*). Quarter to eleven. I may be alone in half an hour. Yes, bring him to me here.

EDDIE. Hurrah! — *Au revoir.*

[*Sir Brice appears at the same door, looks after Eddie, who goes out, saying "Adieu." Sir Brice shuts door, enters.*

SIR BRICE (*to Dulcie*). Well?

[*Dulcie does not reply; goes to her room at back;*

Sir Brice follows her; the door is closed in his face and a lock is heard to turn. Sir Brice shakes the door handle, kicks the door, looks vicious and spiteful, comes down a step or two, kicks a hassock.

[*Servant enters announcing Mr. Lushington. Enter Montagu. Sir Brice nods.*

MONTAGU. Well, dear chum! (*Looking round at the cards on the floor.*) Did you give Fancourt his revenge?

SIR BRICE. Damn the cards!

MONTAGU. By all means. How's Lady Skene?

SIR BRICE (*mutters*). D— Lady Skene!

MONTAGU. By all means.

SIR BRICE. You're married, Lushington—

MONTAGU. I am three months a bridegroom.

SIR BRICE. Why the devil did you get married?

MONTAGU. Because I ascertained that my wife would have seven thousand a year. Why did you?

SIR BRICE. Because I was a silly fool.

MONTAGU. Well, there couldn't be two better reasons for getting married.

SIR BRICE (*furious with his cards*). D— everything and everybody!

MONTAGU. By all means. And now we've reached finality and are utterly the sport of destiny, will you do me a good turn?

SIR BRICE. What?

MONTAGU. I'm going to take a lady to the Opera Ball, and I fear Lady Clarice will be dull, or I should say *restless*, in my absence. I know you will be going to the Cercle d'Amérique to wreck your farthing chance of eternity at poker.

SIR BRICE. Well?

MONTAGU. It would momentarily reinstate your celestial hopes if you would tell Lady Skene that I'm going to the club with you, and persuade her to spend the lonely

hours of her widowhood with Lady Clarice in number one-four-three. They will doubtless tear our characters to rags, but that will keep them from the worse mischief of interfering with us.

SIR BRICE. Will you do me a good turn?

MONTAGU. Anything in my power.

SIR BRICE. Lend me a couple of hundred pounds.

MONTAGU. My dear Bricey, if my I. O. U., or my name, or my presence, is good for anything at the Cercle d'Amérique, you're welcome to it.

SIR BRICE. Will you come with me and set me afloat for a quarter of an hour?

MONTAGU. Certainly.

SIR BRICE. I'll ask Lady Skene. (*Goes up to the door at back, raps.*) Are you there? (*A little louder.*) Are you there?

MONTAGU. Throw in a "my dear," Bricey, or some such trifle. Its effect will be in proportion to its scarcity.

SIR BRICE. My dear (*rapping still*). Mr. Lushington has called. (*Rapping.*) Do you hear, my love? (*With a grim sneer on the last word. The door is opened a little way. Sir Brice forces his way in.*) Lady Clarice wants to know if you will go and sit with her while—

[*The remainder of sentence is lost by the closing of door after him.*

[*Lady Clarice enters door, left, with opera cloak.*

MONTAGU (*showing surprise, which he instantly checks*). Where so gay and free, my love?

CLARICE (*looking him straight in the face very determinedly*). To the Opera Ball.

MONTAGU. Oh.

CLARICE. You're going to take that woman.

MONTAGU. I know many *ladies*, but no *women*.

CHARLEY (*her voice heard outside*). Yes. See if Mr. Lushington is there, and say a lady is waiting for him in the hall—Oh, he's in there; I'll go in.

[*Montagu is going. Lady Clarice makes a little movement to intercept him.*

MONTAGU (*in a low voice*). Don't be foolish.

CHARLEY (*her voice at door, outside.*) Aren't you nearly ready, Monty? (*Appears at door, sees Lady Clarice, takes in the situation at a glance, has a slight shock, but instantly recovers herself. Runs to Lady Clarice, brimming with affection.*) *Darling,* are you going too? So pleased! So charmed! How sweet of you!

[*Offers to kiss Lady Clarice.*

CLARICE (*indignantly*). How dare you!

MONTAGU (*stepping between them*). Hush! (*To Clarice.*) What's the use of having a row here, or anywhere? For Heaven's sake, do be a good sensible girl, and don't shatter the happiness of our married life before—before we know where we are. Charley and I are going to the Opera Ball; will you come with us?

CLARICE (*indignant*). What!

MONTAGU. Or go by yourself. Or go with any one you please. Or go anywhere or do anything in the world you like. Only don't make a scene here.

CLARICE. My father shall know.

MONTAGU. Very well. Very well. We'll discuss that by and by. But do recognise once and for all the futility of rows. You'd better come with us.

[*Enter Sir Brice.*

CLARICE. Come with you?

CHARLEY (*begins*). My dear Clarice, I assure you—

MONTAGU (*stops Charley with a warning look*). For Heaven's sake, Clarice, whatever we do, do not let us make ourselves ridiculous. (*Montagu snatches up Lady Clarice's arm. She reluctantly allows him to do so.*) All right, Bricey. Sorry I can't come with you to the club—but I've persuaded Lady Clarice and Lady Shalford to come to the Opera Ball with

me. Bye, bye, dear crony; our love to Lady Skene. Hope you will have as pleasant an evening as we shall — Ta! Ta!

[*Exit with great animation, Lady Clarice holding reluctantly and aloof on one arm, Charley more affectionate on the other. Sir Brice goes to Dulcie's door, throws it wide open, stands back, calls.*

SIR BRICE. Now, will you let us understand each other once for all?

(*Dulcie enters, looks at him without speaking.*)

I want some money. This fellow Remon has offered you his purse to any extent. Get a few hundreds for me to go on with.

DULCIE. No.

SIR BRICE. You won't? Then why did you begin to take his money?

DULCIE. Because I was weak, because you bullied me, and because I knew I was welcome.

SIR BRICE. Very good. The same reasons continue. You're weak, I'm a bully, and you're welcome. Aren't you welcome, eh? Aren't you welcome?

DULCIE. I believe I am welcome to every penny he has in the world.

SIR BRICE. He loves you?

DULCIE. Yes.

SIR BRICE. And you love him?

DULCIE (*looking straight at Sir Brice very fearlessly and calmly*). With all my heart.

SIR BRICE. And you aren't ashamed to tell me?

DULCIE. Is there anything in your past life that you have taken the trouble to hide from me? Have you ever openly or secretly had an attachment to any living creature that does you as much credit and so little shame as my love for David Remon does to me?

SIR BRICE. All right. Go on loving him. You needn't hesitate. He expects a fair exchange — if he hasn't already got it.

DULCIE (*very calmly*). That's a lie, and you know it is.

SIR BRICE. Very well. It's a lie. I don't care one way or the other. Get me some money.

DULCIE. You have had the last farthing that you will ever touch of David Remon's money.

SIR BRICE. All right. (*Jumps up very determinedly.*) Then you've seen the last you will see of your child for some years to come.

DULCIE (*aroused*). What! you will hit me through my child!

SIR BRICE. I think *my* child's health requires a change for a few years — a different climate from you and myself. We will go upon a little tour by ourselves, shall we? to — where the devil shall we go? I don't care. I shall send Rosy away to-morrow morning. D'ye hear.

DULCIE. I hear.

SIR BRICE. If I don't see you again to-night, get her ready by to-morrow morning.

[*Exit Sir Brice.*

DULCIE (*stands for a moment or two quiet, then bursts into a fit of ironic laughter*). Nell! (*Goes to the door at back; calls out.*) Nell! Nell! Come here!

[*Helen enters.*

HELEN. What's the matter?

DULCIE. Nell, old girl, have you got such a thing as a Church Service about you?

HELEN. Church Service?

DULCIE. I want you to tell me the end and meaning of marriage. There's something about it in the Church Service, is n't there? I did go through it once, I know, but I've forgotten what it's all about. *What does it mean?*

HELEN. Marriage?

DULCIE. Yes. Oh, I know. It's one of Mr. Remon's games.

HELEN. Games?

DULCIE. Yes. He says men and women are playing a lot of queer games on earth that they call religion, love, politics, and this and that and the other — marriage must be one, and it's the funniest of them all! It's a two-handed game like — like cribbage, or tossing up. You choose your partner — heads he's a good 'un, then you're in clover; tails he's a bad 'un, then, it's purgatory and inferno for you for the rest of your life, unless you're a man. It's all right if you're a man. The same game as before, choose your partner — heads she's a good 'un, then you're in clover; tails she's a bad 'un, then you cut her, and toss up again and again, until you do get a good 'un. That's the game — that's the game — and it's a splendid game for a man.

[*Blanchflower, in evening dress, pops in.*

BLANCHFLOWER. How d'ye do, Lady Skene? Am I in the way, eh?

DULCIE. Enter! Enter! Enter! You're just in time. Help us solve this mighty question.

BLANCHFLOWER. Something important, eh?

DULCIE. No, only marriage.

BLANCHFLOWER. What about it?

DULCIE. Well — what about it? Give us your opinion. There's something mystical about it, isn't there? Nell, where's that Church Service? Something mystical?

BLANCHFLOWER. Well, yes; and — hum? eh? (*happy thought*) — something ideal—

DULCIE. Mystical and ideal. Go on, Nell.

HELEN. I'd rather not. I don't like to hear you mocking at marriage.

DULCIE (*laughing*). Mocking at marriage! Oh, my God! is it women who have married bad men that mock at marriage? Make haste, make haste! (*Dashing her hands on the chair*). Marriage is a mystical, ideal state — isn't there something in the Service about

physical? Go on, Nell, go on — help us out. Go on! What have we left out?

HELEN. The wife's duty.

DULCIE. Yah. Yah. Yah.

[*This is very quiet and calm, with a pause after each Yah, very different from the excited Yah! Yah! Yah! Yah! of the second Act.*

HELEN. To her husband to keep her vows. To herself to keep herself pure and stainless, because it is her glory, as it is a man's glory to be brave and honest.

DULCIE (*same position, same tone*). Yah. Yah. Yah.

HELEN. And to society, to her nation, because no nation has ever survived whose women have been immoral.

DULCIE (*suddenly springing up, sitting upright in the chair*). And the men?

HELEN. I don't know whether it's a man's duty to be moral. I'm sure it's a woman's.

DULCIE. Oh, then marriage is a moral state, eh — at least for women, eh, Mr. Blanchflower?

BLANCHFLOWER (*who has shown symptoms of great discomfort through the interview*). Ye—es — decidedly marriage is — or — a — should be a moral state.

DULCIE (*jumping up vigorously*). Ah, now we've got it! Now we can go ahead! Marriage is a physical, mystical, ideal, moral game. Oh, I hate these words, moral, ideal. How if it is n't ideal? Suppose it's horribly, horribly real! How if it is n't moral? Suppose it's horribly, horribly immoral! Moral! Moral!! Moral!!! Is there anything under God's sun so immoral, ah — guess it — guess it — as to be married to a man one hates! And you go on plastering it and poulticing it and sugaring it over with "moral" and "ideal" and "respectable," and all those words that men use to cheat themselves with. It is n't moral to be married to a man one hates! It is n't ideal! It is n't mystical! It's hateful! It's martyrdom!

[*A long pause.*

BLANCHFLOWER (*calm, with a real touch of feeling*). My dear Lady Skene, I won't pretend to offer you advice —

DULCIE (*has recovered from her outburst; now speaks in a very calm, indifferent, matter-of-fact tone*). It does n't matter. You 're going to the ball?

BLANCHFLOWER. I was going — but if I can help you in any way — (*Struck with an idea.*) My uncle, Canon Butterfield, is here for the winter. He suffers from liver, and has written a book on Socinianism. If you want any spiritual advice, I 'm sure you could n't do better.

DULCIE. What is Socinianism? Is it anything to do with marriage?

BLANCHFLOWER. Well — ah — no. Shall I send him?

DULCIE. No, I won't trouble you. I 'll think this out for myself.

BLANCHFLOWER. Well, if you ever do need a clergyman, don't forget my uncle. You can't do better. Or if at any time I can be of any use —

DULCIE. Thank you. Good-night.

BLANCHFLOWER (*shaking hands very sympathetically*). Good-bye.

[*Exit Blanchflower.*

DULCIE (*suddenly*). Nell! (*Helen comes to her.*) Take Rosy up at once, dress her, get out of the hotel by the servants' way, so that you don't meet Sir Brice — take her over to Beaulieu to the Hôtel des Anglais, and wait there till to-morrow morning. I 'll send you a message what to do.

[*Servant enters, announces Mr. Remon — Mr. Edward Remon. Enter David, and Eddie still in Pierrot's dress. Helen shows some surprise. Exit Servant.*

DULCIE. Quick, Nell, do as I tell you.

HELEN (*looking at David and Eddie*). Promise me —

DULCIE. What?

HELEN. You 'll take no step till you 've seen me.

DULCIE. I promise. Make haste. Come here and tell me when Rosy's ready.

HELEN (*comes to David, shakes hands with him*). You heard her promise.

DAVID. She shall keep it.

[*Exit Helen at back.*

EDDIE. I've brought him, Lady Skene. I'm off to the ball. I'm not so tipsy now as I was, but I'm going to have my fling. It's my only chance of going to the devil. Davy, where shall I meet you?

DAVID. I'll come to the Opera House for you. Wait for me there.

EDDIE. Come as soon as you can, won't you? You come too, Lady Skene. You can't think how jolly it is to have no duty and no conscience and no faith and no future, no anything but pleasure and life! Do come! Let's all be fools for once in our lives! Let's be monkeys again! Come on! Come on!

[*Exit Eddie. As soon as he has gone, David and Dulcie, who have been standing on opposite sides of the room, go to each other very calmly. They meet in the middle of the room, take each other's hands. He raises hers to his lips. David's appearance has changed since the last Act; he is more worn and spiritual, a little greyer; very calm at first, an unearthly look in his face. They stand looking at each other for some moments.*

DULCIE. You're changed! You're not well!

DAVID. Quite well. So well, I feel no ill can ever happen to me.

DULCIE. Why did you not come to me before?

DAVID. I'd been able to do you a service. I didn't wish you to think that I had any claim on you.

DULCIE. Ah, you shouldn't misunderstand me. I could never misunderstand you like that. I've taken your money. I knew I was welcome, because — if I were rich and you were poor, I would give you all I had.

DAVID. Ah! Take all I have!

DULCIE. Not another farthing.

DAVID. Why not?

DULCIE. I would be proud to owe all my happiness, all my comfort to you. I have been proud these last six months to think that my child's very bread came from you.

DAVID (*coming nearer to her*). Ah!

DULCIE. I would only have taken just sufficient for necessaries — but he forced me. I was weak. Now the end has come. I won't waste any more of your money in this (*pointing to the cards*) and racing, and — I don't know what.

DAVID. Tell it all.

DULCIE. Things can't go on as they are. (*Smiling.*) Do you remember the Scotchman who lost his mother-in-law and his aunt and three cousins, all in one epidemic? He said it was "just reedeeclous." Things are "just reedeeclous" with me. (*Laughing.*) Sir Brice has threatened to take Rosy away from me.

DAVID. No!

DULCIE. Yes! I'm sending Nell to Beaulieu with her to-night. I don't know what will happen. I don't think I care much. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters. (*Smiling. Then with sudden alarm.*) Yes — this journey of yours to Africa. Must you go?

DAVID. I must. I've been waiting for years for this chance. If I succeed, it will crown all my life's work.

DULCIE. But it's dangerous.

DAVID. I take a doctor and drugs. Besides, I bear a charmed life.

DULCIE. But this fever — Eddie says it is deadly.

DAVID (*with great calmness, looking away*). It will pass me. But if it kills me, I must go.

DULCIE. No, no, no.

DAVID. Yes, yes, yes. I'm pledged. All my world, the little world that takes an interest in me, is watch-

ing me. There's the hope of a great prize. It's my one chance of snatching the poor little laurel-wreath that we mortals call immortality.

DULCIE. But can't you go some other time?

DAVID. I must be at my post, especially as it is a little dangerous — that makes it the post of honour. I've delayed everything till the last moment that I might be near you till the very end.

DULCIE. The end! Then this is the end? I shall never see you again.

DAVID. Yes. When I return.

DULCIE (*shaking her head*). You will not return. (*Looking at him very keenly and closely.*) Tell me, in your heart of hearts do you not know that you will never come back? (*David is about to speak.*) Ah no — tell me the truth!

DAVID (*slowly and fatefully*). I wonder how it is that, when one has carefully weeded out all the old superstitions from one's mind, a crop of new superstitions springs up more foolish than the old ones. I've lived up there so long I've grown morbid. I've an attack of the silliest form of superstition — a presentiment.

DULCIE. Ah, I knew it!

DAVID. In six months I shall laugh at it. We will laugh at it together.

DULCIE (*determinedly*). You shall not go!

DAVID. I must. I'm working with my comrades all over the world. I've undertaken this part of the work. If I don't carry it out I break faith with them and spoil their work too. All the good fellows who are going with me and sharing in my dangers are waiting for me at Marseilles. I can't leave them in the lurch — I can't — you would not have me do it! Say you would n't have me stamp myself a coward, a deserter.

DULCIE. No, no. But I don't want you to go. (*Approaching him.*) If I asked you to stay —

DAVID. You will not — (*Going towards her.*) You will not (*a little nearer*) ask me to stay.

(*She looks at him — gradually they go closer to each other, and his manner changes from a calm, dreamy, fateful tone to a fierce, hoarse, passionate tone.*) Do you know what it means if I stay? Dulcie!

DULCIE. You never called me that before.

DAVID (*clasping her*). I've never been so near to you. Dulcie! (*With sudden, mad abandonment, clasping her passionately.*) Yes, I'll stay! I'll stay! Tell me to stay because — because — you love me.

DULCIE. Stay — because — ah, you know I love you!

DAVID. Eddie's right. Let's be fools to-night! Let's live to-night! I'm hungry for you! Dulcie, tell me once again that you love me.

DULCIE. No — no. Forget it. What have I said? What shall we do?

DAVID. I don't know. What does it matter? We will go to this ball — anything — anywhere! Our lives are in our own hands. Come with me.

[*Sir Brice enters. He shuts the door, stands against it, his feet a little sprawling, his hands in his pockets, looking at them maliciously. Long pause. Helen enters at the other door. Another pause. She beckons Dulcie.*

HELEN. Dulcie!

[*Indicates the inside room. Dulcie goes up to her. Exit Helen. Dulcie at the door looks at the two men. Exit Dulcie.*

The two men are left alone. Another slight pause. Sir Brice walks very deliberately up to David. The two men stand close to each other for a moment or two.

SIR BRICE. You've come to settle your little account, I suppose?

DAVID. I owe you nothing.

SIR BRICE. But I owe you six thousand pounds. I

have n't a penny in the world. I'll cut you for it, double or quits.

DAVID. I don't play cards.

SIR BRICE. You'd better begin.

[*Raps on the table with the cards.*

DAVID (*very firmly*). I don't play cards with *you.*

SIR BRICE. And I say you shall.

DAVID (*very stern and contemptuous*). I don't play cards with you.

[*Goes towards door.*

SIR BRICE. You refuse?

DAVID. I refuse.

SIR BRICE. Once for all, will you give me a chance of paying back the six thousand pounds that Lady Skene has borrowed from you? Yes or no?

DAVID. No.

SIR BRICE. No?

DAVID (*very emphatically*). No. (*Goes to door; suddenly turns round, comes up to him.*) Yes. (*Comes to the table.*) I *do* play cards with you. You want my money. Very well. I'll give you a chance of winning all I have in the world.

SIR BRICE (*after a look of astonishment*). Good. I'm your man. Any game you like, and any stakes.

DAVID (*very calm, cold, intense tone all through*). The stakes on my side are some two hundred thousand pounds. The stakes on your side are — your wife and child.

SIR BRICE (*taken aback*). My wife and child!

DAVID. Your wife and child. Come — begin!

[*Points to the cards.*

SIR BRICE (*getting flurried*). My wife and child? (*Puts his hands restlessly through his hair, looks intently at David. Pause.*) All right. (*Pause. Cunningly.*) I value my wife and child very highly.

DAVID. I value them at all I have in the world. (*Pointing to cards.*) Begin!

SIR BRICE. You seem in a hurry.

DAVID. I believe I have n't six months to live. I want to make the most of those six months. If I have more, I want to make the most of all the years. Begin!

SIR BRICE (*wipes his face with his handkerchief*). This is the first time I've played this game. We'd better arrange conditions.

DAVID. There's only one condition. We play till I'm beggared of every farthing I have, or till you're beggared of them. Sit down!

SIR BRICE (*sits down*). Very well. (*Pause.*) What game?

DAVID. The shortest.

SIR BRICE. Simple cutting?

DAVID. What you please. Begin!

SIR BRICE. There's no hurry. I mean to have a night's fun out of this.

DAVID. Look at me. Don't trifle with me! I want to have done with you. I want them to have done with you. I want to get them away from you. Quick! I want to know now — now — this very moment — whether they are yours or mine. Begin.

SIR BRICE (*shuffles the cards*). All right. What do we cut for?

DAVID. Let one cut settle it.

SIR BRICE. No. It's too much to risk on one throw.

DAVID. One cut. Begin.

SIR BRICE. It's too big. I can't. I like high play, but that's too high for me.

(*David remains at table, very calm; does not stir all through the scene; Sir Brice walking about.*)

No, by Jove! I'll tell you what I'll do. Three cuts out of five. Damn it all! I'm game! Two out of three. By Jove, two out of three! Will that do?

DAVID. So be it! Sit down! Shuffle.

[*Sir Brice sits down; begins shuffling the cards. All*

through the scene he is nervous, excited, hysterical, laughing; David as cold as a statue.

SIR BRICE (*having shuffled*). Now then. Who cuts first?

[*The two men stare fixedly at each other. Dulcie enters at back.*

DULCIE (*surprised*). Mr. Remon! No! No! Not that! Not that!

DAVID (*warning her off with a motion of his hand*). If you please. Stand aside for a moment.

[*Offers the cards to Sir Brice to cut.*

SIR BRICE. Ace counts lowest.

DAVID. As you will. Cut.

[*Sir Brice cuts.*

SIR BRICE. King! By Jove! King! Cut!

[*David cuts.*

Nine! One to me! By Jove! one to me! (*To Dulcie.*) Give us up some of those cards, will you?

(*David by a gesture stops her; takes up the pack that Sir Brice has broken and shuffles them.*)

Shuffle up. By Jove! if I win—

DULCIE. Mr. Remon, you'll not play any more?

DAVID (*very gently*). Stand aside, please.

SIR BRICE. No. Let her shuffle for us. She's in it, isn't she?

DULCIE. What do you mean? What are you playing for?

SIR BRICE. You'd like to know, would you? What are we playing for? I'll tell you. We're playing for you and your child!

DULCIE (*suddenly*). What? (*Shows great horror and astonishment. To David.*) Mr. Remon! It's not so? What are you playing for?

DAVID. He has said. For you and your child. If I win, will you abide by the bargain?

[*Very long pause. She looks from one to the other.*

DULCIE. Yes.

DAVID (*puts cards on table*). Cut.

[*They both shuffle cards.*

SIR BRICE (*very excited, laughing, nervous*). You've got to win both now. You know that?

DAVID. I know.

SIR BRICE (*cuts*). Ten. Not bad. You've got to beat it. Cut!

(*David cuts.*)

Queen! One each! Now for the final, d'ye hear? This is final. If I win — (*Walking about excitedly; pours out a glass of brandy — drinks.*) I'll cut first! No! Damn it all! you cut first! (*Holding cards. David cuts.*) Six. (*To David, suddenly.*) Suppose I win — you'll pay me? You mean to pay me?

DAVID. I shall pay you every farthing.

SIR BRICE. What security do you give me?

DAVID. My word in the presence of the woman I love.

SIR BRICE (*walks about*). Let me be a moment.

DAVID. Cut.

SIR BRICE (*to Dulcie*). You're anxious, are you? I'm going to win! I mean it! I'm going to win! (*To David.*) Now! (*David holds cards; Sir Brice cuts.*) My God! I've lost!

DAVID (*throws down the card-table; leaps at him; catches hold of him by the throat*). Yes, you've lost! She's mine! (*Gets him down on his knees.*) You've cheated me of her all these years! You've cheated me of her love, cheated me of the fatherhood of her child, you've dragged her down, you've dishonoured her! She's my wife now — my wife and child! Take your oath you'll never lay claim to them again! (*Shaking him.*) Swear it!

SIR BRICE. She's yours! Take her! I'll never see her or her child again! I swear it! Take them!

DAVID. Dare to break your word — dare to lay a finger on her or her child — dare to show your face in the home that my love shall give to her — and whatever

laws men have made to bind you and her together, I'll break them and rid her of you! D'ye hear? She's mine! She's mine! She's mine! (*Throws Sir Brice back on the floor. To Dulcie.*) My wife! My child! Come! You're mine!

[*David seizes Dulcie in his arms and falls against door.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE. *The Observatory on Mount Garidelli in the Maritime Alps, near Nice. A door, right. A large fireplace, with pine cones and pine logs ready laid, above door, right. At the back, seen through a large curtained doorway, is the circular Observatory, with large telescope. This room is vaguely seen, the telescope being lighted by a shaft of moonlight at the beginning of the Act. On the left side, slant-wise, a large window, with terrace outside, giving scenery of the Maritime Alps. A large armchair above the fireplace. On table and scattered about the room are a number of scientific books and astronomical instruments and apparatus. The window is curtained with Eastern curtains. As curtain rises the whole scene is dark except for the shaft of moonlight that falls on the telescope.*

[*Enter David and Dulcie.*

DAVID. Come in! Come to your home! My wife!

DULCIE (*cold, shuddering*). Ah no — don't call me that — at least, not yet.

DAVID. You're shivering! Let me give you some wine.

[*Goes to cupboard, brings out bottle and glass, which he fills, places them on table.*

DULCIE. No, no, tell me —

[*Goes to him, looks into his face.*

DAVID (*with great tenderness*). Dulcie! Dulcie! What is it, dear? How cold you are. I'll light the fire. (*Lights fire, which is already laid with large pine cones and logs and quickly blazes up.*) I'm your servant now. I've nothing to do all my life but wait on you. We shall soon have a blaze with these pine logs. My servants left me last night. I thought I should have

no further use for them. I thought my life here was ended. Ended! My life has only begun this last hour. (*Clasping her.*) Dulcie! Do you know where you are? You are in your home. Take off your hat and cloak, dear. (*Gently removes her cloak and puts it on chair.*) There! (*Seats her at the fire in large chair.*) This is your own hearth, dear, your own fireside. You are my bride! No bride was ever so welcome as you. Poor hands so cold.

(*Takes her hands in his, rubs them; as he does so they both at one moment see her wedding-ring. Dulcie withdraws her hand in shame. They look at each other horrified. A pause.*)

Give me your hand.

[*She holds it out. He takes off the ring, goes to window, draws aside the curtains, opens window, throws away the ring, comes back to her. The dawn outside begins and gradually rises into a full sunrise during progress of act.*

DULCIE (*as he returns to her*). Oh, you'll be very kind to me?

DAVID. I have no life, no ambition away from you. The world has gone from me. This journey to Africa — it was the object of my life — it's less than nothing to me now. I've thrown it away, I've forgotten it, because you asked me.

DULCIE. Ah no, you must n't do that. Oh, I'm selfish to take you from your comrades, from your work. You must go and make this great discovery.

DAVID. I've made the one great discovery there was to make. It's the cunningest of them all. We astronomers have been puzzling all our lives to find out what gravitation is. I've found it out. Gravitation is love. It's love that holds together all this universe. It's love that drives every little atom in space to rush to every other little atom. There's love at the centre of the system. There's love at the centre of all things.

No astronomer ever made a discovery equal to that! Dulcie, look at me! What ails you? What are you thinking of?

DULCIE. Nell and Rosy. They'll be here soon.

DAVID. Yes. They can't be long. Don't think of them. Think only of ourselves.

DULCIE. Why wouldn't you come with me to Beaulieu and bring them up here?

DAVID. I was afraid your sister would take you from me. I wanted to have you all to myself. When she comes here, I wanted her to find you already in your home.

DULCIE. It's so strange.

DAVID. What is strange?

DULCIE. To be here with you — alone.

DAVID. It's not strange to me. You've been here so often already. In my loneliness I've pictured you here hundreds of times. I at my work in there, you in this chair by the fire, Rosy playing about the floor.

DULCIE. Rosy.

DAVID. She is my child now, as you are my wife. Dulcie, say you know we have done right.

DULCIE (*distracted*). Right! Yes — yes — I suppose so! What else could we do? What else could I do!

DAVID. Say you know we have done *right*.

DULCIE. *Yes* — yes — I can't think now. (*Returning and throwing her arms round him.*) I only know I love you.

DAVID (*clasping her madly*). Dulcie, this is your home, this is our wedding-day. My bride!

DULCIE (*tearing herself from him*). No, no — not yet! My promise to Nell — I promised her I would take no step till I had seen her.

DAVID (*pursuing her, fiercely clasping her*). You've taken the step. You're mine —

DULCIE. No, no. (*Repulsing him again.*) Let me think. Wait till Nell comes. Ah, don't think I don't love you. There's nothing I wouldn't do or suffer for you.

There's not a thought in my heart that isn't yours. Say you know it! Say you know it!

DAVID. I know it. What then? Tell me what's in your heart.

DULCIE. I can't. Can't you guess?

DAVID. Guess — what?

DULCIE. Oh, it was horrible with him. There was no home, no family, no love. It seemed like a blasphemy of home to live with him. But this — I can't tell you how I feel — I don't think any man can understand it. It's only a woman, and not all women — not many women perhaps — but I feel it. I can't get rid of it. To live with you seems more horrible than the other. I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!

DAVID (*very calmly, very sweetly, very soothingly*). Dearest, you must n't talk like this. Heaven bear me witness you will come to me as pure as if I took you from your mother's side, as pure as if you had never known any kiss but your sister's.

[*Attempts to embrace her.*

DULCIE. Ah! (*Shrinking from him.*) Don't, I tell you; a man can't understand my feelings.

[*Looks at him half-loving, half-horrified; stands looking at him. A little pause.*

DAVID (*same soft, tender tone, very persuasive, very low, very sweet*). Dulcie, in a very little while you will grow to think of me as if I were your very husband — as I shall be; and with you, and your sister, and Eddie, and Rosy, we shall make one happy, one united family.

[*Approaches her.*

DULCIE. Ah! that's it. I feel —

DAVID (*clasping her again*). What?

DULCIE. We can't be a family that way. There's only one way of being a family.

DAVID. And that?

DULCIE. By the marriage and love of husband and wife.

DAVID. It is marriage I offer you. Dulcie, you must see

there's no future for you away from me. Say you'll give yourself to me willingly. (*Pause.*) I will not take you else. Give yourself to me!

DULCIE (*after a pause*). I am yours.

DAVID. No. *Give* yourself to me — wholly, freely, willingly.

DULCIE. Oh! don't you see? I would give you myself — a thousand selves if I could. What is there in me that is worth giving, or worth your taking now?

DAVID. Everything, everything. Give yourself to me!

DULCIE. If I give you myself, I give you the last four years with me. They are part of me. I shall only feel that I can never get rid of them. I cannot get rid of them. Every time you kiss me I shall see him beside us! I cannot! I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!

[*Pause. Eddie looks in at window.*

EDDIE. Ho, ho, Davy! Ho, ho! Here we are!

DULCIE (*goes to window; goes up to him*). My sister and Rosy, are they with you?

EDDIE (*pointing down below*). Quite safe. Here they are. Look alive, Davy! We've no time to waste. I shall be ready in a twinkling. I'm half a fool, and half a wise man just now. In two minutes I shall be in my right senses — or in as many as I've got — and then —

[*Passes by.*

DAVID (*to Dulcie*). Dulcie, your sister is here. Tell her that henceforth you are my wife.

DULCIE. I am your slave, your dog, your anything! Take me if you will — take me! But kill me after. If you don't, I shall kill myself.

[*Helen enters at door; stands for a moment looking at one and then at the other.*

HELEN. Dulcie.

[*Dulcie goes to her.*

DULCIE. Nell! Rosy — where is she?

HELEN (*pointing off*). She's there. (*Dulcie is going.*

Helen stops her.) Let me look at you. (*Dulcie looks frankly at her. Helen smiles, kisses her.*) Go to your baby.

(*Exit Dulcie. Helen shuts the door after her.*)

You've taken her from him? (*David nods.*) For good and all?

DAVID. For good and all.

HELEN. Why have you brought her here?

DAVID. To make her my wife.

HELEN. Your wife? That is impossible, unless—

DAVID. Unless?

HELEN. Unless her husband divorces her and takes her child from her.

DAVID. I've won her from him, her and the child. Don't come between us. Give them to me!

HELEN (*stops him*). She is not mine to give. She is not yours to take. Your brother tells me you're going on this expedition to Africa this morning.

DAVID. I'm not going.

HELEN. Not going? But you have looked forward to it all your life!

DAVID. I've wasted all my life in such dreams and shadows as work and duty. What has it availed me? Now I see one chance of happiness before me, don't take it from me! Give them to me! (*She stops him.*) I will have them!

[*Eddie enters, dressed ready to start.*

EDDIE. Davy, old boy, look alive! The men have got everything on the mules. We've not a moment to waste.

DAVID. I'm not going.

EDDIE. Not going? But they are all waiting for us. If we don't go, all the expeditions everywhere will be a failure. Davy, you aren't going to sell them all like a—like a—They'll call you a—well, you fill in the word.

DAVID. I'm not going.

EDDIE. But what excuse can we make?

DAVID. Any excuse you like — I've changed my mind.

HELEN (*with quiet sarcasm*). Is that a good excuse for a soldier to make just as he's ordered into battle?

DAVID. I'm not a soldier.

HELEN. Yes, you are. We are all soldiers on this earth, bound to be loyal to every one of our comrades, bound to obey the great rules of life, whether they are easy or hard. Yes, and all the more bound when they are hard, when they may cost us our very life. You'll go — you 'll go, and leave her to me and Rosy?

DAVID. I love her! I love her!

HELEN. Then save her for her child. Save her to be a good mother to that little helpless creature she has brought into the world, so that, when her girl grows up and she has to guide her, she'll not have to say to her child, "You can give yourself to this man, and if you don't like him you can give yourself to another, and to another, and so on. It doesn't matter. It was what I did!"

DAVID (*same tone*). I love her! I love her! I love her! You shan't reason me out of my happiness!

HELEN (*stopping him*). I can't reason at all. I can only feel, and I know my instinct is right. I know the woman who gives herself to another man while her husband is alive betrays her sex, and is a bad woman.

DAVID. I love her! I love her!

[*Going towards door.*

HELEN (*stopping him*). Then make your love the best thing in her life, and the best thing in yours. You have loved her so well. You have made so many sacrifices for her. Make this one last sacrifice. Keep her pure for her child.

EDDIE. That's God's voice speaking to you now, Davy.

[*Dulcie enters very quietly, looking off.*

DULCIE (*to David*). She's asleep. Go and look at her.

[*Exit David. Dulcie is about to follow. Helen stops her.*

HELEN. Dulcie.

DULCIE. What?

HELEN. He's given his word to his comrades. Don't make him play the coward.

[*David re-enters, much calmer.*

DAVID. Miss Larondie, I'll write to you from Marseilles. I have left everything in order for her. If by any chance I should not return—

DULCIE. Ah!

[*Goes to him.*

DAVID. Take care of her while I'm away.

DULCIE. But if you do not return?

DAVID (*very calm, very bitter, very tender, with a little smile*). Then—we shall have played our parts well in this little puppet-show, shall we not? Don't cry, my dear; why should you? If I were a soldier, you would tell me to go. We shall not be absent from each other long. Don't cry, dear. It's my duty to go, Dulcie. Be brave. Tell me to go.

DULCIE (*bows her head*). Go. Go.

DAVID (*going from her some steps*). I've played this great game of love like a fool, as men would say. Perhaps I've played the great game of life like a fool, too. If we are sacrificing ourselves for a shadow, we are only doing what earth's best creatures have done before us. If duty is reality, we have done right. Right—wrong—duty—they may be all shadows, but my love for you is real. (*Dulcie is sobbing; he comes to her.*) Hush! Hush, dear! We shall never know satiety. Our love will never grow stale and commonplace, will it? Dulcie, we've only thrown away the husks. We've kept the immortal part of our love—if there is an immortal part. Look! this is my mother's wedding ring. (*Taking a very thin gold ring from his little finger.*) She gave it to me as she was dying. It has never left my finger since. I give it you in exchange for the one I took from you. Give me your

hand. (*Dulcie gives it.*) With this ring I thee wed. As she that bore me was pure, so I leave you pure, dear. Kiss me once — I've held you sacred! (*She kisses him.*) Good-bye. No, stay. (*Pours out a glass of wine; gives it to her.*) Drink with me.

(*She takes the glass, drinks some of it. He takes it from her, drains it, dashes the glass on the floor, where it is shivered to atoms; he then turns very brightly and gaily to Eddie.*)

Now Eddie — our work!

EDDIE. Ready, big brother!

DAVID (*to Dulcie*). In six months from now, come to meet me, my wife, and bring our child. Or, it may be a little later — but come and meet me — my wife — a little later.

DULCIE. Where?

DAVID. In that little star in Andromeda. All 's real there.

[*Exeunt Eddie and David through window.*

CURTAIN

THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Drawing-room at Mr. Harabin's in Mayfair.

Act II. Sir Richard Kato's sitting-room at the St. Mildred's Hotel, Westbay.

Act III. At Sir Richard Kato's house in Harley Street.

CHARACTERS

Sir Richard Kato, Q. C.	Uncles to Lady Susan.
Admiral The Hon. Sir Joseph Darby	
James Harabin (Lady Susan's Husband.)	
Fergusson Pybus.	
Lucien Edensor.	
Mr. Jacomb.	
Kirby.	
Footmen.	
Hotel Waiter.	
Lady Susan Harabin.	
Lady Darby.	
Mrs. Quesnel (Inez).	
Elaine Shrimpton.	

THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN

ACT I

SCENE. *Drawing-room at Mr. Harabin's; an elegantly furnished room in Mayfair. At back, in centre, fireplace, with fire burning. To right of fireplace a door leading to Lady Susan's sitting-room. A door down stage, left.*

Enter Second Footman showing in Lady Darby.

LADY DARBY (*a lady about fifty*). Where is Lady Susan now?

SECOND FOOTMAN. Upstairs in her sitting-room, my lady.

LADY DARBY. Where is Mr. Harabin?

SECOND FOOTMAN. Downstairs in the library, my lady.

[*Enter First Footman and Inez, a widow of about thirty.*

LADY DARBY (*to Second Footman*). Tell Lady Susan I wish to see her at once.

INEZ. And will you say that I am here too?

[*Exeunt First and Second Footman.*

LADY DARBY (*going affectionately to Inez, shaking hands very sympathetically*). My dear Mrs. Quesnel, you know?

INEZ. She wrote me a short note, saying that she had discovered that Mr. Harabin had — and that she'd made up her mind to leave him.

LADY DARBY. Yes, that's what she wrote me. Now, my dear, you're her oldest friend. You'll help me to persuade her to — to — overlook it and hush it up.

INEZ. Oh, certainly. It's the advice everybody always gives in such cases, so I suppose it must be right. What are the particulars?

LADY DARBY. I don't know. But with a man like Harabin — a gentleman in every sense of the word — it can't be a very bad case.

[*Enter Lady Susan, about twenty-seven. Lady Darby goes to Lady Susan very affectionately and sympathetically, kisses her in silence. Lady Susan, having kissed Lady Darby, goes to Inez and kisses her.*

LADY SUSAN. Inez! I'm so glad you've come! I knew I could rely upon you.

INEZ. Yes, dearest — naturally! What can I do?

LADY SUSAN (*taking a bundle of letters from her pocket*). Read those letters. I found them in his *secrétaire*. They explain it all. And then tell me if you wouldn't do as I'm going to do.

LADY DARBY (*very sympathetically*). My poor girl! My poor girl!

LADY SUSAN. Oh! please don't. I'm not an object of pity. At least, if I am now, I won't be one very long.

LADY DARBY. What do you mean?

LADY SUSAN. I'm going to follow Jim's example. I'm going to pay him back in his own coin.

LADY DARBY (*soothingly*). Yes, dear, yes! That's what we all say at first, but we don't mean it. And it can't be as bad as that.

LADY SUSAN. As bad as what?

LADY DARBY. Mr. Harabin may have been indiscreet —

LADY SUSAN. Indiscreet!

[*Enraged laugh.*

LADY DARBY. And infatuated —

LADY SUSAN. Infatuated!

[*Enraged laugh.*

LADY DARBY. And led away —

LADY SUSAN. Indiscreet! Infatuated! Led away!

LADY DARBY. My dear, we may call it what we like, but men are men, and they are led away, and the rest of it.

LADY SUSAN. Very well. I'm going to be indiscreet, and infatuated, and the rest of it.

LADY DARBY. My dear child, that's impossible.

LADY SUSAN. Not at all, my dear aunt.

[*Inez gives back the letters to Lady Susan with a little sigh and a sympathetic look, and a little shake of the head. Lady Susan takes them.*

LADY DARBY. My dear Sue, of course you're angry and upset for the moment — and quite right — quite right! I don't blame you — but after all it can't be such a very bad case.

LADY SUSAN. Every case is a bad case.

LADY DARBY. Oh, no, my dear! Some cases are much worse than others; and when you come to my age you'll be thankful that yours is no worse than a respectable average case.

LADY SUSAN. Respectable average case! No! that's just what my case shall not be. It shan't be average, and perhaps it won't be respectable. Read those letters.

[*Giving letters to Lady Darby. Lady Darby takes the letters and reads them, apart.*

LADY SUSAN (*to Inez*). Well?

INEZ. Well, dearest, it is rather dreadful —

LADY SUSAN. Rather?

INEZ. But look at poor dear Mrs. Barringer!

LADY SUSAN (*enraged*). Ah! that's it! And in a few days all my friends will be saying, "Look at poor dear Lady Sue!" They shan't say that. They shall say, "Look at poor dear Jim Harabin!" If somebody is to be pitied, it shall be Jim.

INEZ. But, dear, you won't do anything in a hurry?

LADY SUSAN. If I don't, I can't do anything at all. I can't rake it up a year hence.

INEZ. No, but I should wait till —

LADY SUSAN. Till the next time. No! I've made up my mind. I'm going back home with you now — that is, if you'll have me for a day or two till I can make my plans.

INEZ. Certainly, dearest; you know you're welcome.

LADY SUSAN. There's a dear! Phillips is packing my things. I shall be ready in an hour.

INEZ. Of course, dear, I'm delighted. But I'm going to Egypt in a few days.

LADY SUSAN. Oh, that's splendid! We can go together, and have a good time. Ah, Inez, how lucky you've been! (*Inez looks surprised.*) No, I don't mean that, dear, but still a widow's position has some advantages, has n't it?

LADY DARBY (*having read the letters, sighs very deeply, and shakes her head*). The old story! The old story! [*Gives them back to Lady Susan, who takes them and puts them in her pocket.*

LADY SUSAN. And what would you advise me to do?

LADY DARBY. I should give him a good sound talking to. I should make his life a misery to him for a fortnight; then — I should never mention the matter again.

LADY SUSAN (*enraged laugh*). Ha, ha! Ha, ha! (*To Inez.*) And what would you advise me to do?

INEZ. Well — I should n't nag him. I should be utterly broken-hearted and mutely reproachful. I should look more intensely interesting, and a little paler, and wear prettier frocks, and give him a better dinner each evening; and when he had begged forgiveness for a long while, I should find it in my heart to — to forgive him.

LADY SUSAN (*outburst of enraged laughter*). Ah! that's it! We are such traitors to ourselves. If we could only bind ourselves together —

LADY DARBY. A trades-union of our sex? My dear, seven-eighths of us are natural blacklegs to start with.

LADY SUSAN. Yes, and that's why men are spoilt. It's our cowardice and weakness and falsehood that make them such brutes.

LADY DARBY. They are brutes!

INEZ. Yes, but that's God's fault more than woman's.

LADY DARBY. I don't know whose the fault is, but there's no denying they are brutes.

INEZ (*sighs*). I'm afraid they are; but I don't see what we are to do except take them as we find them and make the best of them.

[*Enter First Footman announcing Sir Richard Kato. Sir Richard, a bright, shrewd man of the world, about fifty, enters. Exit Footman.*

SIR RICHARD (*very sympathetically*). My dear Sue! How d'ye do, Lady Darby? How d'ye do, Mrs. Quesnel? (*Shakes hands — a pause — Sir Richard looks keenly from one to the other.*) Anything important under discussion?

LADY SUSAN. You may speak out, Uncle Dick; they know all about it.

SIR RICHARD. Then I'm sure they are of the same opinion that I am.

LADY DARBY. I've strongly advised Sue to — to make the best of it.

INEZ. And so have I.

LADY SUSAN. Oh, yes! "Patch it up!" "Don't make a fuss about it!" That's what outsiders always say to a woman.

SIR RICHARD. And, my dear Sue, as outsiders see most of the game, you may depend, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, outsiders are right.

LADY SUSAN. Ah, you've never been deceived.

SIR RICHARD. Well, I've never been *married*. But I've had twenty-five years' practice in the Divorce Court, and if I'm not qualified to give advice in a matter of this kind, I don't know any man in England who is.

LADY SUSAN (*impetuously*). I don't want advice. I want sympathy.

SIR RICHARD. Well, I am sure you will have the deepest sympathy from all —

LADY SUSAN (*enraged*). I don't want sympathy. I won't have it.

SIR RICHARD. My dear Sue, what do you want?

LADY SUSAN. I want somebody to show me some way of paying him back without — without —

SIR RICHARD. Without losing your place in society and your self-respect. Ah! that's the difficulty. There's an immense reputation to be made as a moralist by any man who will show you ladies the way to break the seventh commandment without leaving any ill effects on society.

LADY SUSAN. Well, he'd better make haste or we shall find out a way ourselves.

SIR RICHARD (*shakes his head*). My dear Sue, believe me, what is sauce for the goose will never be sauce for the gander. In fact, there is no gander sauce, eh, Lady Darby?

LADY DARBY. No. If there had been, our grandmothers would have found it out and left us the receipt for it.

SIR RICHARD (*very affectionately*). Come, come, Sue! (*Putting his arm very tenderly on hers.*) Come, now! Let us talk this over quite calmly and sensibly.

[*With great tenderness.*

LADY SUSAN. Oh, yes! I know what you mean. But I won't listen to another word unless you promise you won't advise me to patch it up.

SIR RICHARD. I promise. Now, what is the exact point at which we have arrived? Where are we? What were you saying when I came in?

[*Looking from one to the other.*

LADY SUSAN. I'd just said that men are brutes.

LADY DARBY. And I had agreed.

INEZ. And I too — with some qualifications.

SIR RICHARD. And I agree with you — without any qualifications. Men are brutes. Once recognize that simple fact in all its bearings, and we start on a basis of sound philosophy.

LADY SUSAN. I don't want any basis, or any sound philosophy. I want my revenge.

SIR RICHARD (*to Lady Darby*). Leave her to me for a little while, and come back again.

LADY DARBY. And what's to be done with Mr. Harabin?

SIR RICHARD. What can be done with him?

LADY DARBY. Somebody ought to give him a good sound talking to.

SIR RICHARD. Leave him to me, too.

LADY DARBY (*suddenly bethinking herself*). Good gracious!

INEZ. What's the matter?

LADY DARBY. I was going to Waterloo to meet Sir Joseph when Sue's letter came, and I forgot all about him. His ship's just come into Portsmouth. I shall miss him now. (*Taking out watch.*) And I haven't seen the dear man for six months.

[*Exit Lady Darby very hurriedly. Inez is following.*

LADY SUSAN. Inez!

INEZ. Yes, dearest.

LADY SUSAN. I'm coming with you.

INEZ. No, dearest — I'll go and get your room ready, and come back in half-an-hour, and if you are still in the same mind —

LADY SUSAN. You'll take me with you?

INEZ. We'll see about it.

[*Exit Inez.*

SIR RICHARD (*very tenderly*). Come, Sue, I've only your welfare at heart. I've no personal interest to serve.

LADY SUSAN. Why did you let me get married?

SIR RICHARD. My dear, if you remember, you were so anxious and so sure of happiness —

LADY SUSAN. But why didn't you tell me what marriage was?

SIR RICHARD. My dear, in the first place you wouldn't have listened —

LADY SUSAN (*confidently*). Oh, yes, I should.

SIR RICHARD. In the second place you wouldn't have heeded —

LADY SUSAN. Oh, yes, I should — if you had painted marriage in its true colours.

SIR RICHARD. It has so many true colours.

LADY SUSAN. No, it has n't. It 's a hateful, wretched institution.

SIR RICHARD. Marriage is not a hateful, wretched institution. On the contrary, after twenty-five years' constant practice in the Divorce Court, I am prepared to affirm that marriage is a perfect institution —

LADY SUSAN. What?

SIR RICHARD. — worked by imperfect creatures. So it 's like a good ship manned by a mutinous crew.

LADY SUSAN. It 's men that make it what it is.

SIR RICHARD. Yes — and women. And the result is a condition that varies in each case with all the varying tastes, tempers, dispositions, infirmities, prejudices, habits, etc., etc., etc., of the contracting parties. Now you yourself are a perfect woman —

LADY SUSAN. I? perfect? I 've never pretended to that.

SIR RICHARD. Well, you see, dear, that introduces one little kink into the working of the institution in your case. Still, however, as Jim Harabin is perfect —

LADY SUSAN. Jim perfect? !

SIR RICHARD. You thought him perfect at the time of your engagement, if you remember.

LADY SUSAN. Never!

SIR RICHARD. Well, you see, that introduces another little kink into the working of the institution in your case. So you saw his faults?

LADY SUSAN. Always — heaps of faults.

SIR RICHARD. Then, my dear, if that did n't stop you from marrying him, do you think it would have stopped you if I had hinted at, or even described, certain other faults? No; you would have been shocked and grieved. He would have promised amendment. And in the end you would have forgiven him. And at this precise

moment we should be at the very precise point at which we have now arrived.

LADY SUSAN. Oh no! I should n't have forgiven him.

SIR RICHARD. Then, my dear, you 'd have been on the high way to be an old maid, and at this precise moment you would have been railing at me for having spoilt your chances. And that reminds me, while you 're blaming me for letting you marry, Elaine is blaming me for trying to stop her from throwing herself away on this — what 's the fool's name? — Fergusson Pybus.

LADY SUSAN. She 's written to him to come to see you at once.

SIR RICHARD. What for?

LADY SUSAN. She knows there has been a misunderstanding between Jim and me, and she knows that I am leaving the house. When I 've gone, of course I can't chaperon her any longer.

SIR RICHARD. And so you intend to throw her back on my hands. (*Perplexed.*) Now, my dear Sue, do be a sensible girl, and — and —

LADY SUSAN. No. You promised me you would n't advise me to patch it up.

SIR RICHARD. Well, will you listen to what Jim has to say?

LADY SUSAN. I have. It 's no use.

SIR RICHARD. Have you thoroughly rowed him?

LADY SUSAN. Not so much as he deserves.

SIR RICHARD. No — no — but still considerably, eh? And he 's thoroughly ashamed of himself?

LADY SUSAN. Not so much as he ought to be.

SIR RICHARD. No — no — but still, considerably, eh? Well now (*making a dart at the bell-handle and pulling it*) — we 'll have him up.

LADY SUSAN (*very decidedly*). No. I won't meet him.

SIR RICHARD. My dear Sue, if you 're going to leave him, don't give him a chance to say that you did n't thoroughly explain your reasons for taking the step.

(*First Footman appears at door.*) Will you tell Mr. Harabin I should like to see him for a minute?

[*Exit Footman.*

LADY SUSAN. It's no use—

[*Going off.*

SIR RICHARD (*going to door, stopping her*). My dear Sue, let's hear what the accused has to say.

LADY SUSAN. I have heard.

SIR RICHARD. Well, perhaps there is something else.

LADY SUSAN. Yes; he has thought of some fresh excuses.

SIR RICHARD. Perhaps he's more sorry and ashamed.

LADY SUSAN. Well, what then?

SIR RICHARD. Then you'll forgive him. (*Lady Susan shakes her head.*) It will come to that at the last, my dear Sue. Why not spare yourself and all of us no end of trouble and anxiety, and forgive him at first?

LADY SUSAN. No! Not till I have something to be forgiven on my side.

[*Sir Richard shrugs his shoulders.*

[*Enter James Harabin, an average English gentleman about forty, a little inclined to stoutness. He comes in hesitatingly, evidently very ashamed and uncomfortable, his eyes averted.*

SIR RICHARD (*the moment he has entered begins very sternly*). Now, Harabin, this is really disgraceful. I haven't words to characterise your conduct. Sue has my countenance in all she is saying and doing. Frankly, I don't counsel her to forgive you, and you'll be very lucky indeed if you can persuade her. Now what have you got to say for yourself? At least, don't try to excuse yourself. The only thing to do is to throw yourself on her mercy, and if she does forgive you, it's a thousand times more than you deserve. And let me tell you, it's only one woman in a thousand who would be magnanimous enough to do it. Now!

HARABIN (*very lamely and hesitatingly*). I know I've behaved in a very foolish and blackguardly way—

SIR RICHARD. You have. Go on.

HARABIN (*same distressed, uncomfortable manner*). And I'm very sorry now — that —

LADY SUSAN. Now that you're found out. Yes, that is a pity.

SIR RICHARD (*same stern, sharp tone*). But are you genuinely sorry — deeply, sincerely, truly, lastingly, penitent?

HARABIN. I am indeed.

LADY SUSAN. Of course. But can he give me any reason for his conduct — one single little reason?

SIR RICHARD. No, he can't. I'm sure he can't.

LADY SUSAN. Then I don't see any reason that I should overlook it.

[*Going off, left. Sir Richard gets to the door and stops her.*

SIR RICHARD (*to Harabin very sternly*). Can you give one single little reason for your conduct?

LADY SUSAN. Is my company unpleasant? Is my temper bad? Has he found me flirting with anybody? Have I given him his dinners badly cooked? He must surely be able to give some shadow of a reason.

SIR RICHARD. Come, sir, you must surely be able to give some shadow of a reason.

HARABIN (*fumbling, uncomfortably*). I must own, Sir Richard, that I can't.

SIR RICHARD. I thought not. I'm glad you have the grace to own that.

LADY SUSAN. What, no reason?

HARABIN. Except — (*turns to Sir Richard*). Well, Kato, you'd find it out if you were married yourself —

SIR RICHARD. Stick to the point. I'm not married. Find out what?

HARABIN. Well — married life, even with the best and sweetest of wives, does grow confoundedly unromantic at times.

LADY SUSAN (*with a peal of ironic laughter*). Unro-

mantic! Ha! ha! ha! If it comes to romance, I think I'm rather a more romantic person to live with than you. Unromantic! Married life isn't very romantic with you, Jim.

SIR RICHARD. Married life isn't very romantic anywhere, with anybody, and it ought not to be. When it is, it gets into the Divorce Court. You ought to have finished with romance long ago, both of you.

LADY SUSAN. Jim is twelve years older than I am, so if he hasn't finished with it, I'm twelve years to the good yet. Unromantic! Don't you think that married life grows unromantic for women? Don't you think we want our little romance as well as you? Unromantic! Ha! ha!

SIR RICHARD (*stopping her and turning sternly to Harabin*). There, Harabin, you see what you've done! See the extremities to which you are driving the best of wives. The unwomanly, unfeminine attitude you have forced her to take up —

LADY SUSAN. Unwomanly! Unfeminine!

SIR RICHARD (*soothingly*). Yes, my dear, but it isn't your fault. Your language and behaviour are quite natural under the circumstances. (*Very sternly, turning to Harabin.*) Harabin! why don't you do something to repair your fault?

HARABIN (*same lame, uncomfortable manner*). I've offered to take the villa at Cannes she liked last year.

LADY SUSAN (*contemptuously*). Ha!

HARABIN. And I have asked her to go to Hunt and Roskell the jewellers and choose something. I don't mind what I do to show my regret.

SIR RICHARD. Well, that's something. If I were Sue, I should accept the villa at Cannes and a diamond ring and bracelet from Hunt and Roskell's; not in the least as any reparation of your fault — nothing can repair that — but as a sign of belief in the genuineness of your — your remorse. What else can you do?

HARABIN. Anything that you can suggest.

SIR RICHARD. You have of course absolutely broken off — ?

HARABIN. Absolutely. I have given Sue assurances and proofs of that.

SIR RICHARD. And you promise that nothing shall ever induce you to renew the acquaintance?

HARABIN. I promise.

SIR RICHARD. You hear, Sue?

LADY SUSAN. Oh, yes. Of course. But will he promise that nothing of this kind shall ever happen again? [*Looking at Harabin.*

HARABIN. Yes, certainly.

LADY SUSAN. Will you give me your word of honour as a gentleman that it shall never happen again? Your sacred word — Uncle Dick, listen to this! — now, sir, your sacred word of honour, your parole.

[*Harabin is about to promise, then checks himself.*

LADY SUSAN (*fiercely*). Ha! (*To Sir Richard.*) There! You see! I knew! He promises it shall never happen again — until the next time. (*To Harabin.*) You needn't give your promise — I'll save you the trouble of breaking it.

[*Exit, fiercely.*

[*Harabin and Sir Richard stand and look at each other, nonplussed, for some moments, without speaking.*

SIR RICHARD. I gave it you hot, Jim, but, upon my word, you deserve it.

HARABIN. I know I do.

SIR RICHARD. Why didn't you make haste and give your word of honour it shouldn't happen again?

HARABIN. So I should in another moment. But hang it all, Kato, I didn't like to pledge myself irrevocably — in case, you know —

SIR RICHARD. But don't you mean it never to happen again?

HARABIN. Yes, of course. But, after giving my word of

honour as a gentleman, I should have felt so jolly uncomfortable if it had. I say, Kato, what can I do?

SIR RICHARD. I don't know. I've done all I can to bring her round.

[*Enter Footman, announcing Sir Joseph Darby.*

[*Enter Admiral Sir Joseph Darby, a jovial English gentleman of about sixty. Exit Footman.*

ADMIRAL (*very cordially*). My dear Jim— (*Shakes hands.*) Sir Richard. Is Lady Darby here?

SIR RICHARD. She left a little while ago, to meet you at Waterloo.

ADMIRAL. I've been home, and they told me she'd come here. I haven't seen her for six months, bless her heart! Well, I'll be off back.

[*Going.*

SIR RICHARD. You'd better wait. She's coming back here.

ADMIRAL. Coming back here?

SIR RICHARD. The fact is, we've had a little—matrimonial upset.

[*Pause.*

ADMIRAL. What's the matter, eh, Jim?

HARABIN. Lady Susan and I—

ADMIRAL. That's bad! That's very bad! You've been married six years. There never ought to be any quarrels after the first year.

SIR RICHARD. Or even then.

ADMIRAL. Oh, yes. I allow every married couple twelve months for what I call the shaking-down process; that is, to learn each other's tempers, to learn the give and take of married life. In all well-regulated households, for the woman to learn that she has got a master. In all ill-regulated households, for the man to learn that he has got a master. The first year of our married life Lady Darby and I lived a thorough cat-and-dog life. (*A roar of reminiscent laughter.*) We had a battle royal, I assure you, every day of our

life. Ho! Ho! Ho! But we shook down comfortably after that — God bless her! God bless her! You're sure she's coming back here?

SIR RICHARD. Oh, yes.

ADMIRAL (*turning to Harabin*). Now, Jim, how is it the shaking-down process isn't complete in your case? What is it? Extravagance? debts? incompatibility of temper? jealousy? She's jealous, eh?

HARABIN. Worse, I'm afraid, Sir Joseph, and — I regret to say I've given her only too much cause.

ADMIRAL. That's awkward, that's very awkward. So she's found you out. Well, then, you must own up like a man. And, above all, mind your *p*'s and *q*'s till things have shaken down again.

HARABIN. But she won't let things shake down.

ADMIRAL. Oh, yes, she will. That's what it always comes to. Women are noble creatures — bless 'em! bless 'em! My wife, now — I've been a sad rascal, Jim — I won't mince matters — I've been a thorough out-and-out rascal. (*Much affected.*) I can't forgive myself. But she's forgiven me. Ah! what angels women are! Yes, she's forgiven me freely! (*Slight pause.*) I haven't told her all. But she's forgiven me freely what I have told her. So I thought I would n't grieve her by telling her any more.

[*Sits and ponders his past transgressions, much affected.*

[*Enter Footman.*

FOOTMAN (*to Sir Richard*). I beg pardon, Sir Richard, Mr. Fergusson Pybus is below and would like to speak to you.

SIR RICHARD. Jim, here is this creature that is running after Elaine. Can I see him here for a few moments?

HARABIN. Certainly. (*To Footman.*) Show Mr. Pybus up.

[*Exit Footman.*

SIR RICHARD. I've done my best to break off the match,

but Elaine seems determined to have him. Why I should saddle myself with another ward when I'd already got Sue to look after, is a mystery to me.

[*Enter Footman announcing Mr. Fergusson Pybus.*

[*Enter Fergusson Pybus, a lank, dreamy young man of twenty-five, with longish light hair, and precise, nervous, and rather affected manner. Exit Footman.*

PYBUS. How d' ye do, Sir Richard?

(*Sir Richard gives a curt nod in return. Pybus bows to Admiral, who is seated in gloomy reflection on his past transgressions, and takes no notice. Goes very sympathetically, with timid, ingratiating manner, to Harabin.*)

My dear Harabin (*takes Harabin's hand, holds it between both of his for a moment with an expression of the deepest sympathy*), you have my deepest, my most heartfelt sympathy.

HARABIN (*gruffly*). What for?

PYBUS. Miss Shrimpton has acquainted me with the regrettable fact that there is a serious misunderstanding between you and Lady Susan. (*Harabin roughly withdraws his hand.*) I trust I am not indiscreet. (*To Admiral.*) Sir Joseph Darby, I believe. (*Admiral bows.*) Then I'm speaking *en famille*. My dear Harabin, I can't say how much I regret this. I do not seek to know the nature of this misunderstanding — I do not ask who is to blame. There is to me in all matrimonial disagreements such a want of — of symmetry, a want of — a — proportion — of harmony — a want of beauty, so to speak. It affects me like a wrong note in music, like a — (*descriptive gesture*), like a faulty dash of colour in a picture — it distresses me.

SIR RICHARD. Does it?

PYBUS. Woman is to me (*Admiral begins to listen*) something so priceless, so perfect, so rare, so intolerably superior in every way to man, that I instinctively fall upon my knees before her.

ADMIRAL (*in a tone of contemptuous inquiry*). Are you married, sir?

PYBUS (*undecidedly*). No — no — not at present. Now, my dear Harabin, may I offer my services as a — what shall I say? — ambassador between you and Lady Susan?

HARABIN. Thank you, that's not necessary.

PYBUS. I'm delighted to hear it. But I do implore you to lose no time in placing yourself in the most abject position before your offended deity.

(*Harabin looks at Pybus with rather angry impatience, turns his back on him, and goes up stage.*)

(*Following Harabin up.*) Pardon me, I have never disguised from you or Sir Richard (*turning to Sir Richard*) that it is only by the constant companionship and influence of Miss Shrimpton in the tenderest union, that I can hope to gain that power over myself, that ascendency over my fellows, that — that divine afflatus which — which will, I trust, enable me to — a — to — stamp myself upon the age.

HARABIN. Sir Richard is Miss Shrimpton's guardian. I'll leave you to speak to him. (*He goes over to Sir Richard and speaks in a low tone.*) What can I do about Sue?

SIR RICHARD. Try another coax.

ADMIRAL (*pulling out his watch*). Are you sure, Sir Richard, that Lady Darby is coming back here?

SIR RICHARD. Oh, yes. Go up with Jim and see Sue, and get her to listen to reason.

HARABIN. Yes, Sir Joseph, perhaps she'll listen to you.

ADMIRAL. I can't think what's coming over women. They never used to make this fuss. I never had any nonsense of this sort with Lady Darby. She used to make things very uncomfortable for about a fortnight, and then she dropped it. Ah! what an angel my wife is!

[*Exeunt Harabin and the Admiral.*

PYBUS (*to Sir Richard*). I cannot tell you how an affair of this kind distresses me. It seems to me so strange, so extraordinary, so impossible, that a man and a lady, united in the tenderest bonds, with every inducement to make each other supremely happy; with nothing to offer but worship and reverence on the man's side, nothing but courtesy and divine condescension on the lady's side — it seems so strange that two such beings should bicker and wrangle and bring discord into the harmony of life. Why should they do it? Why should they do it?

SIR RICHARD. Ah! why should they?

PYBUS. Sir Richard, I have already approached you with regard to — to — her —

SIR RICHARD (*rings bell*). Let me see, what is your exact position?

PYBUS. I have now been her humble suitor for more than six months.

SIR RICHARD. Yes, I know. But your pecuniary position?

PYBUS. My father left me a modest annual income in consols.

[*First Footman appears at door.*

SIR RICHARD. Will you ask Miss Shrimpton to come here for a few moments? (*Exit First Footman.*) What is the amount of this modest annual income?

PYBUS. It is not so much the exact amount of my income as the fact that with — with her to inspire me, I feel I shall be able to — a — in some way — stamp myself upon the age.

SIR RICHARD. And is that likely to be very lucrative?

PYBUS. What?

SIR RICHARD. Stamping yourself upon the age. What's it likely to bring in?

PYBUS (*undecidedly*). Well — of course — that would depend upon the way in which I — a — stamp myself upon the age.

SIR RICHARD. Just so. It seems a trifle problematic. So I 'm afraid we must come back to the precise amount of this modest and annual income. How much?

PYBUS. Well — a — it is a capitalised sum of — a — ten thousand pounds.

SIR RICHARD. Bringing in an annual income of two hundred and seventy-five pounds. Miss Shrimpton's fortune is — perhaps you know the amount?

PYBUS. I do not seek to know. There is something inexpressibly repulsive to me in the bare idea of receiving money with Elaine. It seems like a crime. I want my wife to be a fairy creature, incessantly, perpetually, a fairy creature.

SIR RICHARD (*dryly*). Ah!

PYBUS. I should wish her to come to me penniless, shoeless, without even rags —

[*Enter Elaine Shrimpton, a raw, self-assertive modern young lady, with brusque and decided manner. Pybus assumes an attitude of devotion, props his head upon his hand, sighs, and worships her from afar.*

ELAINE. How d' ye do, Sir Richard? Fergusson has told you of our decision?

[*Looking inquiringly at Pybus.*

PYBUS (*nervously*). I have hinted to Sir Richard that —

[*Leaves off, nervously.*

ELAINE. In a few months I shall be twenty-one. I find I cannot stay any longer with Lady Susan, so I wish to know definitely if you will give your consent to our immediate marriage.

PYBUS (*same nervous, timid, deprecating manner*). Of course — we should wish to be guided by your advice, Sir Richard — that is — if —

SIR RICHARD. That is, if my advice coincides with your own wishes.

PYBUS. Yes; and even if it did not, we should at least — a — a —

SIR RICHARD. You would at least listen to it. Thank you.

ELAINE (*very decidedly*). At the same time, we feel that we have duties and responsibilities that we shall allow no worm-eaten conventionalities of society to interfere with.

PYBUS. I feel that it is only by the — a — the — a — constant stimulus and charm of her presence that I can — a — (*Musingly, looking at her devotedly.*) Ye — es, ye — es —

ELAINE. Fergusson has a career before him; I, too, have a career before me. Why should we blind our eyes to the plainest and most sacred duties that lie before us — our duties to ourselves?

SIR RICHARD (*trying to get a word in*). Well — I —

ELAINE (*stopping him*). Why should we check the natural, self-ordained, self-consecrated development of our characters?

SIR RICHARD. Well, if I might suggest —

ELAINE. Why should we dwarf and stunt ourselves physically, morally, intellectually, for the sake of propping up a society that is decrepit and moribund to its core? Why should we?

SIR RICHARD. I would n't if I were you.

PYBUS. I trust you don't think, Sir Richard, that we are taking up this attitude in any disrespect to you as Elaine's guardian.

SIR RICHARD. No, but —

ELAINE (*stopping him*). We have thoroughly sifted the matter, and we are prepared to argue it out point by point, and step by step, from beginning to end, if you wish to discuss it.

SIR RICHARD. Not at all, thank you.

ELAINE. Then, as you have nothing to say —

SIR RICHARD. Excuse me, as I 'm your guardian, and as I have the command of your fortune until you 're twenty-five, I have just a word or two to say.

ELAINE (*resigns herself in a bored attitude*). Well?

SIR RICHARD. In the first place, I should advise you not to marry. (*Elaine suddenly turns round on him.*) At least, not at present.

ELAINE. I thought we had already dismissed that point as settled, eh, Fergusson?

PYBUS. Ye — es — I really thought — I assure you, Sir Richard, we value your advice immensely, immensely — but —

SIR RICHARD. But you won't take it. Very well, we'll consider that point settled. You marry as soon as Elaine's twenty-one.

PYBUS. And I assure you when we find ourselves in any difficulty we shall always come to you, shan't we, Elaine?

ELAINE. We are scarcely likely to find ourselves in any difficulty where our own good sense will not be an ample guide.

PYBUS. No, no! but if we do we'll come to you, Sir Richard.

SIR RICHARD. Thank you. Well, we'll consider you married. Mr. Pybus, you have an annual income of two hundred and seventy-five pounds. I shall allow Elaine precisely the same sum annually until she is twenty-five.

ELAINE. What? You will hold back my money! It's cowardly! But so like a man! Brute force! — brute force! — never anything but brute force! Never any other argument!

SIR RICHARD. My dear Elaine, an allowance of two hundred and seventy-five pounds a year —

ELAINE (*taking him up quickly*). Is at bottom, when you analyse it, nothing more or less than an exhibition of brute force. What else is it? Analyse it.

SIR RICHARD (*very calm*). Thank you, no! We'll adopt the synthetic method, and call it brute force. Well, that point's settled. I think that's all. I had a little advice to bestow.

ELAINE. Advice? Well, go on.

SIR RICHARD. On second thoughts, I really feel that I'm taking rather a mean advantage of my age and experience.

ELAINE. No — no. We'll hear what you have to say.

PYBUS. I assure you, Sir Richard, that although we haven't adopted your advice, we have the highest opinion of it.

SIR RICHARD. Thank you. (*They both assume a bored expression, half supercilious, half benevolent.*) I hope you won't mind my telling you, Mr. Pybus, that Elaine is a rather ignorant, impulsive girl, with a smattering of pseudo-scientific knowledge, chiefly picked up from unwholesome feminine novels.

(*Elaine looks defiant. Pybus coughs, a bored, distressed, supercilious, remonstrative cough. Sir Richard, taking no notice, continues.*)

If you want to be happy with her, you'll put her with some good housewife for a few months, where she will gain some rudimentary knowledge of housekeeping, and learn those little arts which are necessary to make a home comfortable on an income of five hundred and fifty pounds a year. A few cooking lessons might not be out of place.

(*Elaine throws up her arms with a gesture of contemptuous despair at Sir Richard's stupidity. Pybus exchanges glances with her, and coughs and fidgets. Sir Richard, taking no notice, continues.*)

And I hope you won't mind my telling you, Elaine, that Mr. Pybus, although doubtless a very clever and talented man —

[*Pybus coughs his cough.*

ELAINE. Fergusson is a genius, if ever there was a genius on this earth!

SIR RICHARD (*same calm tone*). I've no doubt! I've no doubt! And I'm sure he will stamp himself upon the age in some highly interesting and original way.

(*Pybus coughs again.*) I should advise him to choose the most lucrative, and stick to that.

[*Pybus again coughs, with more pity and contempt.*

ELAINE. Have you anything more to say?

SIR RICHARD. So much for you individually. For the pair of you, as a mere matter of duty, and quite in a perfunctory way, without expecting you to pay the least attention to what I am saying, let me assure you that you'll find marriage a very trying and difficult position, full of cares and anxieties, that this romantic attachment of yours will probably wear away before long— (*Incredulous protestation on the part of both.*) And then you will have to face the coarse and brutal bread-and-cheese realities of life. You'll find that you have tempers to train and subdue, whims and obstinacies of your own to check, whims and obstinacies of your partner to indulge. There will be the need of daily, hourly forbearance and kindliness, a constant overlooking of each other's faults and imperfections. And if towards the close of your married life you can look back upon it, not indeed without regrets, but without remorse, and on the whole with pleasure and thankfulness, it will only be because you have shut your eyes to much, forgiven much, and utterly forgotten a good deal more.

ELAINE. Sir Richard, you 're talking about what you have absolutely no experience of.

SIR RICHARD (*rather angrily*). No experience?

ELAINE. You have never been married. (*Sir Richard makes an impatient gesture.*) And why do you advise us?

SIR RICHARD (*hurriedly*). I don't! I don't! Kindly let me know when you have fixed the date of your marriage, and if I can be of the least use in any possible way, pray command me.

[*Exit Sir Richard.*

ELAINE (*looking after him*). Sir Richard grows more

brutally cynical every day. And to refuse me my money!

PYBUS. My dear Elaine, let us at the very outset of our married life make it a rule to avoid all that is mean and petty and commonplace in life. What I want you to do, my dearest, is to surround me with — (*descriptive gesture*) — with all that is sweet and dainty and graceful and beautiful. Do you understand, my darling?

ELAINE (*dubiously*). Ye — es.

PYBUS. To create a lovely lonely world for me to dwell in, so that I may be able to bring all my powers to their full fruition. Do you see, my dearest?

ELAINE. Yes, dearest. We will help each other. I feel, too, that I have a message for this age.

PYBUS. Ye — es. Ye — es. Still, I think, darling, it would be more profitable — I don't use the word in a pecuniary sense — if you were chiefly to devote yourself to — as I say — (*descriptive gesture*) — as it were — do you see, dear?

ELAINE. Oh, yes. But still, of course, I shall be free to develop my own character.

PYBUS. Of course, dearest, of course. Still, I think —

[*Admiral enters, very excited, and hurriedly.*

ADMIRAL. Excuse me, I've just seen Lady Darby drive up in a cab.

[*Enter First Footman, showing in Lady Darby. Exit Footman.*

ADMIRAL. My dear girl —

[*Embraces her very effusively.*

LADY DARBY. My dear Jo —

[*Pybus coughs and seems uncomfortable.*

ADMIRAL (*glancing at him and speaking very sternly*). I have not seen Lady Darby for some months, sir.

[*Takes Lady Darby up stage.*

PYBUS (*to Elaine*). Come, dearest, we will go into the

morning room. I do not like these coarse manifestations of affection.

[*Exeunt Pybus and Elaine.*

ADMIRAL. My darling girl (*looks at her with great admiration*), how well you're looking! Upon my word, Victoria, you're worth forty bread-and-butter misses! You are! Now, come, sit down my dear; tell me all the news.

[*Enter First Footman, showing in Inez. Admiral shows great impatience.*

INEZ. How d'ye do, Sir Joseph?

ADMIRAL. How d'ye do?

[*Beckons Lady Darby, to get her away.*

[*Re-enter Sir Richard, very downcast.*

INEZ. Well, Sir Richard?

SIR RICHARD (*shakes his head*). Sue is determined to leave him.

INEZ. What's to be done?

SIR RICHARD. Nothing, except give her her head till she comes round.

LADY DARBY. We must keep people from knowing it; and, above all, we must keep it out of the papers. What can we do?

[*Sits down and begins to write hurriedly.*

SIR RICHARD. Mrs. Quesnel, since there's no help for it, will you take care of her for a few weeks, and bring her round to a sensible frame of mind?

INEZ. Of course, anything that I can do —

[*Re-enter Lady Susan, apparently in very bright spirits, dressed as for a journey; followed by Maid with parcels and bandboxes.*

LADY SUSAN. Now, Inez, I'm ready. Is your carriage outside?

INEZ (*doubtfully*). Ye — es, but —

LADY SUSAN (*to Maid*). Phillips, put them in Mrs. Quesnel's carriage, and come back and bring the rest of my luggage.

[*Exit Maid with bandboxes and parcels.*

LADY SUSAN. Good-bye, Uncle Jo! (*Kissing the Admiral.*) Good-bye, Uncle Dick! (*Kissing him.*) Good-bye, auntie!

LADY DARBY. You foolish woman!

LADY SUSAN. What are you writing?

LADY DARBY (*reads*). "Lady Susan Harabin, whose health has been in a very delicate state for some time past, has left for Egypt with Mrs. Quesnel."

[*Harabin enters, looking half wretched and half defiant.*

LADY DARBY (*continuing to read*). "Mr. James Harabin has gone to Yorkshire for a few weeks' shooting before rejoining Lady Susan."

LADY SUSAN (*shrugs her shoulders*). I've said good-bye to everybody, haven't I?

HARABIN (*sternly*). You have not said good-bye to me, madam.

LADY SUSAN (*with great politeness*). Good-bye, my dear sir. Come, Inez.

[*Inez protests a little. Lady Susan gently pushes her off left; is going after her.*

HARABIN (*trying to assume a tone of stern authority*). Where are you going, madam?

LADY SUSAN (*same tone of extremely calm politeness*). I am going to find a little romance, and introduce it into our married life.

[*Going off.*

HARABIN (*loud, angry*). I forbid you, madam! I forbid you.

[*Lady Susan, in the most graceful, calm, and polite way, snaps her fingers three times at him, each time with a larger action, then backs out of door, left, bowing profoundly and politely to him. Harabin makes an angry dash after her, realises he is powerless, stops, stands in a state of helpless, pathetic bewilderment*

for a few moments, then turns and appeals in turn for sympathy to Lady Darby, who slowly and sympathetically shakes her head and sighs deeply; to the Admiral, who purses his lips and pulls a long face; to Sir Richard, who shrugs his shoulders. Harabin stands helpless.

SLOW CURTAIN

(*Ten months passes between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE. *Sir Richard Kato's sitting-room at the St. Mildred's Hotel, Westbay, a comfortable room in a good-class seaside hotel. A door, right. A large window, left, opening upon balcony and giving exit to gardens.*

Discover Sir Richard writing at table. Enter Waiter, showing in Inez. Exit Waiter.

SIR RICHARD (*rising, shaking hands very cordially*). My dear Mrs. Quesnel!

INEZ. What has brought you to Westbay, Sir Richard?

SIR RICHARD. An appeal from Elaine, who seems to have made a bad start in matrimony —

INEZ. Oh, yes, she and Mr. Pybus are down here in separate apartments —

SIR RICHARD. My wish to see my young friend Lucien, my wish to see Sue, my wish to see you. — First of all, how is Sue?

INEZ. In the rudest health. We've had a glorious time.

SIR RICHARD. You've been away from England ten months. Weren't you and Sue getting a little homesick, eh?

INEZ (*meditating*). N — o, n — o. I don't think so.

SIR RICHARD. I'm sorry. Tell me everything about Sue.

INEZ. I've told you everything in my letters.

SIR RICHARD. Yes, but what are her feelings towards her husband?

INEZ. I haven't the key of her heart.

SIR RICHARD. But so far as you can judge?

INEZ. So far as I can judge, Sue is in a state of the most perfect indifference towards every man alive. But that is the attitude which you men force us to

assume to you, to ourselves, to everybody except the one man alive.

SIR RICHARD. But there is no *one-man-alive* in Sue's case?

INEZ. Not that I know of. But don't trust either my eyesight or my penetration, because —

SIR RICHARD. Because?

INEZ. Because if I were in Sue's place I should take good care that nobody knew. And I credit Sue with the common or garden powers of deception.

(*Sir Richard walks about, a little perplexed and uncomfortable.*)

It 's charming of me to give away my sex to you like this is n't it?

SIR RICHARD. It is. I assure you I appreciate it. After a life-time's practice in the Divorce Court I still feel myself like Newton, a mere child on the seashore, with all the boundless ocean of woman's mysterious nature stretching silent, and unnavigable, and unexplorable before me.

INEZ. Perhaps the Divorce Court is n't the best place to learn what unsuspected depths and treasures there are in woman's nature.

SIR RICHARD (*very winning and confidential*). Well, now tell me — I 'm only asking in the purest spirit of scientific inquiry — are there any depths and treasures which we mere outsiders, men, never suspect?

INEZ. Shall I tell you? Yes, treasures of faithfulness, treasures of devotion, of self-sacrifice, of courage, of comradeship, of loyalty. And above all, treasures of deceit — loving, honourable deceit, and secrecy and treachery.

SIR RICHARD. I had already suspected there might be an occasional jewel of that sort in the dark, unfathomed caves.

INEZ. You 're laughing at me. You men never will see anything but a comedy in it. So we have to dress up our tragedy as a comedy just to save ourselves

from being ridiculous and boring you. But we women feel it is a tragedy all the same.

SIR RICHARD (*with real feeling*). Surely you have no tragedy in your life?

INEZ. I? (*Laughs.*) Oh! dear no. And you?

[*Very searchingly.*

SIR RICHARD. I? Oh! dear no. (*Pause — a shadow of recollection crosses his face.*) None that I cannot hide, or, better still, laugh at.

INEZ. Ah, that's it. Our own hearts aren't sacred to us. That's our real modern tragedy — we laugh at the tragedy of our own lives!

SIR RICHARD. No, no, that's our real modern comedy and our truest wisdom. (*Inez shakes her head.*) Yes, yes, believe me, it is so. We'll keep on dressing it up as a comedy for fear of boring people and making ourselves ridiculous. To come back to Sue —

INEZ. Where's Mr. Harabin?

SIR RICHARD. You'll keep my secret?

INEZ. Honour!

SIR RICHARD. On his way here.

INEZ. On his way here?

SIR RICHARD (*nods*). Sir Joseph and Lady Darby are bringing him. I came last evening to reconnoitre, but I didn't get in till midnight. Now, can't you and I, like good Samaritans, pour in wine and oil upon the wound?

INEZ. I'm always pouring in oil, but Sue doesn't seem to trouble very much about the wound.

SIR RICHARD. You don't rub it in. Not enough elbow-grease, eh?

INEZ. Perhaps. It's very absurd to make a fuss about other people's love affairs.

SIR RICHARD. But when a husband and wife have quarrelled — ?

INEZ. Then it's clearly one's duty to advise them to make it up. And one does it, the same as one goes

to church, because it is one's duty, not because there's any result from it.

SIR RICHARD (*takes out watch*). You'd better send Sue to me, but don't tell her that Harabin is coming. (*Enter Waiter. Brings card to Sir Richard.*) Where are you staying?

INEZ. Seven, Marine Gardens — it's just opposite.

[*Goes towards window.*

SIR RICHARD (*to Waiter*). Show Mr. Edensor in.

[*Exit Waiter.*

INEZ. Edensor? There was a Mr. Edensor staying at the hotel at Cairo last year.

SIR RICHARD. This is Lucien Edensor.

INEZ. It must be the same.

SIR RICHARD. He's the son of my old friend Danby Edensor. His father died in India last year, and I've got him a government appointment in New Zealand. He wrote to me from Eastgate, so I asked him to come over and see me. Do you know him?

INEZ. Very slightly, only a *table-d'hôte* acquaintance. This is my nearest way. I'll send Sue to you.

[*Exit Inez at balcony. Enter Waiter announcing Mr. Lucien Edensor. Enter Lucien Edensor, a handsome young man about twenty-five. Exit Waiter.*

SIR RICHARD. Ah, my dear boy.

[*Shakes hands very warmly.*

LUCIEN. Sir Richard, how can I thank you?

SIR RICHARD. By saying nothing at all about it, and proving that you are the right man for the post.

LUCIEN. I shall do all I can to justify your recommendation.

SIR RICHARD. I'm sure you will. When do you start?

LUCIEN. Next Thursday.

SIR RICHARD. It will be a wrench to leave England for so many years?

LUCIEN. I'm rather glad of it. The truth is, Sir Richard, I'm awfully down in the mouth.

SIR RICHARD. What's the matter? A woman? (*Lucien nods.*) Poor boy! Ah well, at your age you'll get over that.

LUCIEN. I shall never get over it.

SIR RICHARD. That's what we all say at twenty-five, and it does credit to our youthful innocence.

LUCIEN. I shall never forget her.

SIR RICHARD. No; but you'll wonder what on earth you could have seen in her to rave about.

LUCIEN. You don't know how I love her.

SIR RICHARD. Yes I do, my boy. I've been twenty-five. I've had my illusions. At twenty-five you have the delight of your illusions, and you laugh at the fogies. But at fifty you'll have the far greater delight of seeing through your illusions and laughing at the youngsters. Take my word for it, fifty is the age when a healthy man begins to enjoy life.

LUCIEN (*bitterly*). And when, instead of loving a woman with all his heart, he can laugh at her!

SIR RICHARD. No, no! when he can love her and laugh at her too. When he can love 'em all very much more, and when, damn 'em, they can plague him very much less.

LUCIEN. I shall never love but this one woman as long as I live.

SIR RICHARD. So you say! So you say!

LUCIEN (*rather angrily*). You don't believe me?

SIR RICHARD. My dear Lucien, I bought all there was left of your father's very excellent Madeira. To-day is the fifth of September. Write to me every fifth of September and say, "On my honour, I love her still," and on *my* honour I'll send you half-a-dozen bottles of that excellent Madeira every year. Is it a bargain?

LUCIEN. Yes. (*Shakes hands; then suddenly remembers.*) There were only two dozen of that Madeira left! It won't last out!

SIR RICHARD. My boy, it will last out your love.

LUCIEN. Sir Richard, when you talk like that, I feel, in spite of all you have done for me, I feel I — I almost hate you. I love her, and if my love is an illusion, I hope I shall die in it!

SIR RICHARD (*with a change in manner, very softly and tenderly*). You 're right. (*A long sigh.*) Love her, my dear boy, love her as long as you can.

LUCIEN. Do you say that, Sir Richard? even if —

SIR RICHARD. If what?

LUCIEN. If she 's the wife of another man?

SIR RICHARD. The devil! No!

LUCIEN. I can't help it. I must keep on loving her.

SIR RICHARD. Very well then, keep on loving her. But pack off to New Zealand next Thursday. Now let 's drop her. You 'll want the agreement and the letter of instructions. They 're upstairs.

[*He is going to door when enter Waiter, showing in Lady Susan. Lucien starts a little, unnoticed by Sir Richard. Exit Waiter.*

LADY SUSAN (*begins very affectionately*). My dear Uncle Dick! (*Sees Lucien, starts rather violently. Sir Richard sees her confusion. Lucien, behind Sir Richard's back, makes her a sign of warning.*) You have a visitor.

SIR RICHARD. You know Mr. Edensor?

LADY SUSAN (*who has a little recovered*). No.

SIR RICHARD. Then let me introduce you. Mr. Lucien Edensor, Lady Susan Harabin.

LADY SUSAN. I thought at first that I had met you, but —

LUCIEN. I don't think I 've had the pleasure.

[*An awkward little pause.*

SIR RICHARD. I 'll fetch those instructions, Lucien.

[*He turns suddenly at door, sees they are both watching him furtively. Exit Sir Richard. They watch him off. The moment he has left the room, they turn to each other.*

LADY SUSAN (*pleased, excited, frightened*). Lucien!

LUCIEN. Lady Sue!

LADY SUSAN (*alarmed*). We haven't — betrayed ourselves?

LUCIEN. No — I don't think so.

LADY SUSAN. What brings you here? Why didn't you let me know you were coming? Why haven't you sent me a message all these months?

LUCIEN. You said I was not to write.

LADY SUSAN (*reproachfully*). And you obeyed me!

LUCIEN. When my father died, Sir Richard was such a brick to me, I felt I couldn't behave like a blackguard and bring disgrace to his family. But now I've seen you again —

[*Tries to clasp her.*

LADY SUSAN (*repulsing him*). Hush! We shall be heard! What can we do?

LUCIEN. Go back to the old sweet days of last year: let it all be as it was then. That last Sunday at Cairo —

LADY SUSAN (*frightened, looking round*). Hush! You're sure nobody suspected.

LUCIEN. How could they? We were always so careful.

LADY SUSAN. Oh, I should kill myself if any one knew! You have never spoken of me — boasted to any of your men friends — ?

LUCIEN. Lady Susan, I'm not a cad.

LADY SUSAN. Forgive me, I know you wouldn't — and you never will?

LUCIEN. Be sure you will never be (*looking at her with great intentness*) *misjudged* through me.

LADY SUSAN. Thank you. No one will ever guess —

LUCIEN. No one shall ever guess *what — never — happened.*

[*She looks at him very gratefully and affectionately, presses his hand with great gratitude.*

LADY SUSAN. Thank you! Thank you! Sh!

[*Enter Sir Richard with papers in his hands.*

Throughout the act his outward demeanour to the persons on the stage is that of great frankness and entire absence of suspicion; but whenever the business of the stage allows it, he shows to audience that he is most keenly watching every word, movement, and glance of Lady Susan, Inez, and Lucien.

SIR RICHARD. Lucien, my boy, you 'll stay to lunch with us?

LUCIEN. Yes. No, I don't think — at least —

[*Glances at Lady Susan.*

SIR RICHARD. Oh, I insist. I 've brought the agreement and instructions. You 'll have time to study them carefully on your way to New Zealand.

LADY SUSAN. New Zealand?

LUCIEN. I 'm leaving for New Zealand next Thursday.

LADY SUSAN. For long?

LUCIEN. For some years, perhaps for life.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed!

SIR RICHARD. You had better take these —

[*Is about to cross and give papers to Lucien, when Waiter enters, showing in Inez.*

[*Enter Inez. Exit Waiter. Sir Richard watches very closely to see if Inez and Lucien recognise each other. Inez slightly bows to Lucien. Lucien returns it in the same unembarrassed manner.*

SIR RICHARD (*papers still in hand, to Inez*). Did n't you say that Mr. Edensor was staying at your hotel at Cairo last year?

INEZ (*quite frankly*). Yes. (*To Lucien.*) If you remember, we used to sit opposite to you at *table-d'hôte*.

LADY SUSAN (*suddenly, a little overdoing it*). Of course! I could not imagine where I had met Mr. Edensor. Now I remember quite well!

[*Sir Richard turns and looks at her.*

LUCIEN (*a little lamely*). Yes, but really it had escaped me.

[*Sir Richard turns and looks at him.*

SIR RICHARD. Very natural. Well, you 'll sit opposite to each other again at lunch with me to-day. (*Giving papers.*) Take these into the smoking-room and look through them. Wait for me there.

LUCIEN (*has taken papers, to Inez*). Then I shall meet you again at lunch.

SIR RICHARD. Yes, you 'll meet her again at lunch. (*Exit Lucien.*) My dear Sue, welcome to England! I 'm delighted to see you. Quite well and happy, eh?

[*Looks at her.*

LADY SUSAN. Quite well, and *perfectly* happy.

SIR RICHARD (*between her and Inez*). That 's right. So you did n't remember Lucien?

[*In a tone of affected carelessness, the tone of a skilful cross-examiner who is leading his witness unsuspectingly on.*

LADY SUSAN. Yes, I did, but I could *not* recall where it was I had met him. (*Turning to Inez.*) *You* remembered him at once?

INEZ (*very frankly*). Oh, yes. He sat almost opposite to us at *table-d'hôte* for a month. Then he was called away suddenly to India to his father, who was dying.

LADY SUSAN. Was he? I 'd forgotten.

[*Sir Richard watches the following scene unobtrusively, but most intently.*

INEZ. My dear Sue, where is your memory? Nearly every one in the hotel went to see him off at the —

LADY SUSAN. I 'm sure I did n't.

INEZ. Everybody except you. That was the Monday night. And on the Sunday night, if you recollect —

LADY SUSAN (*very quickly and pettishly*). My dear Inez, you seem strangely interested in this young fellow.

INEZ. I seem interested! I scarcely spoke to him.

LADY SUSAN. Neither did I.

INEZ. At any rate, you were at church with him on the Sunday night.

LADY SUSAN (*confused*). I 'm sure I — who told you that?

INEZ. You told me you were going to church on the Sunday evening. I stayed at home. Did you go?

LADY SUSAN (*confused*). Did I? Let me think — Yes, yes, I did.

INEZ. After dinner Mr. Edensor came into the drawing-room. Mrs. Grantham asked him where he'd been. He said, "To church." She said, "Isn't it very late?" He said, "The sermon was a very long one." You hadn't come in. I asked him if he had seen you at church, and he said, "Yes, she sat in the next pew to me." When I got upstairs, you had just come in. I said, "You're very late." You said, "The sermon was a very long one," and —

LADY SUSAN. Oh, my dear Inez, it was an awful, awful, awful sermon. It was just as boring as this rigmarole of yours. Now do, please, stop, and let us finish with this terrible young fellow.

INEZ (*a little angry*). My dear Sue, the young fellow is no concern of mine.

LADY SUSAN. And I'm sure he's none of mine.

INEZ (*a little nettled*). I didn't say he was.

LADY SUSAN. Then why do you wish to make out that we went to church together?

INEZ. My dear Sue, why do you make such a fuss about it?

SIR RICHARD (*interposing, soothing them down*). Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! My dear Mrs. Quesnel, you're making a mountain out of a molehill. Sue went to church, as I understand, this particular Sunday night. Eh, Sue?

[*Inez begins to watch very intently.*

LADY SUSAN. Yes.

SIR RICHARD. And by the merest chance Mr. Edensor went to the same church?

LADY SUSAN. Yes.

SIR RICHARD. You neither went with him nor came back with him?

LADY SUSAN (*hesitates a little*). N — o.

SIR RICHARD. But by the merest chance he happened to sit in the same pew with you?

LADY SUSAN. Yes. No. I 'm not sure. I can't remember.

INEZ. It was the next pew; at least, so Mr. Edensor said.

LADY SUSAN. Yes, the next pew. I remember now. It was the next pew. (*Getting more and more confused.*) He sat on this side — no, on this — no — I — (*Meets Sir Richard's look.*) I forget, and there 's an end of it.

[*Goes up to balcony in a temper, stands there with her back to Sir Richard and Inez.*

[*Enter Waiter with cards on tray, hands them to Sir Richard. Sir Richard takes cards, looks at Lady Susan, whose back is to him, shows them to Inez.*

INEZ (*in a low voice to him*). Mr. Harabin!

SIR RICHARD (*cautiously*). Shush! don't tell her. (*To Waiter.*) I 'll come and speak to them.

[*Exit Waiter. Exit Sir Richard.*

LADY SUSAN (*to Inez*). Inez, it 's mean of you to spread such stories about me. I thought you were my friend.

INEZ. So I am, dearest. Sue, if you have been — foolish —

LADY SUSAN. Foolish?

INEZ. With this Mr. Edensor —

LADY SUSAN (*very indignant*). Inez!

INEZ. Dearest, I said "if." You know, dear, you may rely upon me. I 'll say anything to help you —

LADY SUSAN (*dignified innocent tone*). Thank you? If you will only say the simple truth, that will be quite sufficient to clear my conduct of all suspicion. (*Suddenly, eagerly.*) You never saw anything to lead you to suppose —

INEZ. No, not at the time. The idea never came to me till this moment. Then there was nothing between you, dearest?

[*Very searchingly.*

LADY SUSAN (*emphatically*). No, not even so much as an innocent flirtation. You know, Inez, if there were, I should tell you. I tell you everything.

INEZ. Do you?

LADY SUSAN. Yes. And you tell me everything, don't you, dearest?

INEZ. Yes, dearest, everything.

[*Kisses her.*

[*Re-enter Sir Richard.*

SIR RICHARD. You 'll stay to lunch, Sue? I 'm going to have quite a pleasant little party.

LADY SUSAN. Who 's coming?

SIR RICHARD. Is n't there one very old friend, and a dear good fellow, whom you would be pleased to meet again?

LADY SUSAN. My husband! Uncle Dick, how can you insult me by asking me to meet my husband?

SIR RICHARD. My dear Sue, why should n't you meet your husband?

LADY SUSAN. Because — because it 's impossible.

SIR RICHARD. Why? You have n't carried out your threat?

LADY SUSAN. What threat?

SIR RICHARD. To introduce a little romance into your married life.

LADY SUSAN (*with the greatest indignation*). Uncle Dick!

SIR RICHARD. But you threatened —

LADY SUSAN. Threatened! What else can we poor women do? Oh! and you could believe that I could be guilty of — (*Horror-stricken.*) Oh! oh! Will men never understand a woman?

[*Exit Lady Susan very indignantly at balcony. Sir Richard and Inez look at each other nonplussed.*

INEZ. Our oil does n't seem to be lubricating.

SIR RICHARD. Mrs. Quesnel, honour — was there anything between Sue and young Edensor at Cairo?

INEZ. On my honour, I believe, no.

[*Enter Waiter at door.*

WAITER. Mr. and Mrs. Fergusson Pybus are here and would like to see you, Sir Richard.

SIR RICHARD. Show them in. And let me know when Sir Joseph Darby and Mr. Harabin return.

[*Exit Waiter.*

INEZ. What's to be done about Sue?

SIR RICHARD. More oil. A constant gentle application. Go and soothe her down and bring her over to lunch if you can.

INEZ. If we don't succeed, what a lot of oil we shall have wasted!

[*Exit Inez at balcony.*

[*Sir Richard, left alone for some moments, walks up and down room very perplexed, indicating that he is putting together the links of a chain of evidence, and puzzling them out in his own mind; walks, stops suddenly, slightly scratches his forehead, puts one forefinger on the other, puts head on one side, walks again, puzzled.*

[*Enter Waiter, announcing Mr. and Mrs. Pybus. Enter Elaine and Pybus, slowly and a little sulkily, as if on bad terms with each other. Exit Waiter.*

SIR RICHARD (*cordially*). Well? (*Shaking hands with each of them.*) Well? (*Looking from one to the other.*) What's the matter? Nothing serious, I hope?

PYBUS. We told you, Sir Richard, that we should come to you if any difficulty arose.

SIR RICHARD. Thank you. (*To him.*) Sit down. (*To her.*) Sit down.

[*They sit down, one on each side of him.*

SIR RICHARD (*genially*). Now tell me all about it.

[*During the following scene Sir Richard is quietly seated between the two. He does not interfere in the least, but merely turns his head from one to the other as each begins to speak.*

ELAINE. The whole thing is in a nutshell. Is the mistress of the house to be consulted on a purely domestic arrangement, or is she not? Is she to be treated as a rational creature, or is she not?

PYBUS. My darling, I have always wished to treat you as something entirely sweet and perfect and gracious; something sainted and apart; but when you insist on getting on a chair and breaking the looking-glass — you do make it a little difficult, my darling, for me to — to — (*descriptive gesture*) — to cherish my ideal of you.

ELAINE. It was your pushing that broke the looking-glass.

PYBUS. My darling, I was quite gentle. I merely held the corner of the dressing-table in a firm position while you struggled.

ELAINE. Just so. You merely asserted your superior brute force. Brute force! Brute force! When will Woman hear any other argument from Man?

PYBUS. My dear Elaine, I did argue with you for nearly three-quarters of an hour. I explained how impossible it is for me to — to concentrate myself, to bring all my manifold powers to bear upon the problems of this age while you are shaking the washing-stand, and letting the breakfast get quite cold merely for the sake of indulging your own whims.

ELAINE. Whims? I have no whims. I have only convictions.

PYBUS. My dear Elaine, what is it but a whim when you —

ELAINE. Really, Fergusson, it is impossible —

[*Rising angrily.*

PYBUS (*also rising angrily*). Really, my darling, I cannot —

SIR RICHARD (*interposing, soothes them down*). Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Sit down. Sit down, both of you. (*Motioning them into their chairs again.*) Sit down.

There is to me in all matrimonial disagreements a want of harmony, a want of beauty, so to speak, which I am quite sure, Mr. Pybus, must be as distressing to you as it is to me.

PYBUS. That is what I am always explaining to Elaine. We made it a rule when we were married to avoid all that is petty and mean and commonplace in life.

SIR RICHARD (*soothingly*). An excellent rule. It ought to be incorporated in the marriage service. (*Throughout the scene he maintains a perfectly calm and judicial bearing.*) Well now. You were married on the second of February. After your honeymoon, you took up your residence at —

PYBUS. At Clapham.

SIR RICHARD. At Clapham. You made it a rule to avoid all that is mean and petty and commonplace in life, and you took up your residence at Clapham. I forget the exact address?

PYBUS. "The Nest," Gladstone Road, Clapham.

SIR RICHARD. "The Nest," Gladstone Road, Clapham.

PYBUS (*plaintively*). I cannot say that Clapham appeals to me.

ELAINE. Clapham is intolerably surburban. The inhabitants of Clapham are entirely conventional persons. They do not live in the realm of ideas at all. And Fergusson will not join me in rousing —

PYBUS (*interrupting her*). My angel, I do think it is of more importance that you should —

[*Ends with a feeble descriptive gesture.*

ELAINE. And I think that it is of more importance that you should assist me in organising my society.

PYBUS. I cannot see, my dear —

ELAINE (*stopping him*). No, Fergusson, you cannot see. That is the difficulty with men. They cannot see.

PYBUS. Really, my darling —

[*Rises again angrily.*

ELAINE. Really —

SIR RICHARD (*soothing them down*). Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! (*Gets them seated again. To Elaine.*) What is this society you are organising?

ELAINE. The Clapham Women's League for the Inculcation of the New Morality among the Women of Clapham.

SIR RICHARD. What is the New Morality? Has it anything to do with the Ten Commandments?

ELAINE. It is not based precisely upon those lines. (*Beginning oratorically.*) There is an immense future for Woman—

SIR RICHARD (*hurriedly stopping her*). I'm sure there is! I'm sure there is! But we must not discuss the future of woman just now. Well, now, you agree upon one thing. You both dislike Clapham.

ELAINE. It is your unwarranted retention of my fortune, Sir Richard, that—

SIR RICHARD (*interrupts, stopping her*). Yes, yes,—we must not discuss my conduct just now.

ELAINE. But it is your conduct that compels us to exist in a jerry-built villa, in a wretched suburb surrounded by suburban persons with entirely suburban ideas—

SIR RICHARD. My dear Elaine, we must not discuss Clapham just now. (*Taking out watch.*) I want to hear the history of this unfortunate disagreement between you and Mr. Pybus.

ELAINE. But it all arises from living in Clapham.

SIR RICHARD. Oh! I thought you said it was a purely domestic affair.

ELAINE. So it is. We live in Gladstone Road, Clapham.

SIR RICHARD. But how does that produce disagreements between you and Mr. Pybus?

PYBUS. I am of an intensely nervous and artistic temperament, and I cannot shave in the morning unless the blind is fully drawn up so that I can perceive, with the utmost nicety, the exact position of any pimple—otherwise I cut myself.

ELAINE. But it is very inconvenient that the blind should be drawn up, because of the neighbours in the rooms of the opposite house.

PYBUS. I am sure Sir Richard will agree that it is highly desirable that the blind should be drawn up.

SIR RICHARD (*judicially*). It certainly is highly desirable, Mr. Pybus, that you should not cut yourself while shaving.

PYBUS (*to Elaine, triumphantly*). There!

ELAINE. But if the blind is drawn up, the people in the opposite house—

SIR RICHARD. It is highly desirable that the good folks who live in Clapham should not be shocked.

ELAINE (*triumphantly to Pybus*). There! And every morning Fergusson will insist—

PYBUS. My dear, it is you who will insist. And really—

SIR RICHARD. Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch!

PYBUS (*plaintively*). It affected my health so much I was obliged to leave Clapham. And I cannot consent to return to "The Nest" unless Elaine—

[*Descriptive gesture.*

ELAINE. Nor can I—unless—

SIR RICHARD. Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! (*In a very calm and judicial tone.*) Is there only one blind to this window, or is there also a small muslin blind?

ELAINE. There is a small muslin blind.

[*Pybus nods acquiescence.*

SIR RICHARD. What is the distance from the top of the muslin blind to the top of the window?

ELAINE. Four feet.

PYBUS. Three, my dear.

ELAINE. Four.

PYBUS. I'm sure, my darling—

ELAINE. I measured.

PYBUS. I'm sure—my dear, if you will contradict—

[*Piteously.*

SIR RICHARD. Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! We'll have

it measured again. (*To Pybus.*) The looking-glass is immediately under the window?

PYBUS (*pathetically*). The looking-glass is unfortunately broken.

SIR RICHARD. Kindly replace it at my expense. (*Proceeds judicially.*) If the roller blind were drawn down each morning to exactly half the distance between the top of the window and the top of the muslin blind, it would allow plenty of light for you to shave by, Mr. Pybus?

PYBUS. Yes, — yes, I think so, but really I cannot —

SIR RICHARD. Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! (*Turning to Elaine.*) And it would also protect any one inside the room from the observation of the neighbours opposite?

ELAINE. Yes. Unless any one went near the window.

SIR RICHARD. Well, now, it seems to me it would be convenient to every one concerned if, during the time Mr. Pybus is shaving in the morning, the roller blind is drawn down exactly half the distance. And during that time it would be convenient if you, Elaine, did not go within two yards of the window.

[*Enter Waiter.*

WAITER. Sir Joseph Darby and Mr. Harabin are outside, Sir Richard.

SIR RICHARD. Show them in. (*Exit Waiter.*) Now, won't that arrangement enable you to return in perfect agreement, like doves to the nest?

PYBUS (*doubtful*). Yes, perhaps, but —

ELAINE. Well, that depends —

SIR RICHARD. Go and take a pleasant little stroll in the gardens (*getting them off at window*), and arrange in future for the blind to be just half-way up — that is to say, neither up nor down!

[*Gets them off at window.*

[*Enter Waiter, showing in Admiral and Lady Darby. Exit Waiter.*

SIR RICHARD (*to Admiral*). Well, how does he seem now?

[*Admiral shakes his head very sympathetically, and points to Harabin, who enters very slowly, hands in pockets, very downcast and miserable. He walks despondently to armchair, drops into it listlessly, and stares in front of him with the pathetic expression of a man very much ill-used by the world.*

ADMIRAL (*pointing to Harabin as to a martyr*). There! There you see the result of all this tomfoolery of woman's higher education! There you see what happens when a woman takes the bit into her mouth. A man's peace and happiness utterly ruined!

[*Harabin sits in plaintive silence, taking no notice.*

LADY DARBY. Quite true, Jo, but (*with a severe look at Harabin*) that does not excuse a man for forgetting that he has got a good wife, and—

ADMIRAL (*quickly*). No, my darling; when a man has a good wife, it's a rascally shame to forget her. And to think that next Saturday I shall be compelled to leave you for— (*Is much affected.*) Ah, Victoria, if you had only been a good sailor!

LADY DARBY. I'm not so sure that we should have been any happier, Jo. You never seem to appreciate me so much as you do the week before you leave me, and the week after you return.

ADMIRAL. Well, perhaps it's best as it is, my love, perhaps it's best as it is!

HARABIN (*feebly, pathetically*). Kato, I'm all to pieces. I couldn't eat any breakfast.

SIR RICHARD (*ringing bell*). My dear Jim! What shall it be? A chop, steak, bacon and eggs—

HARABIN (*shuddering, shakes his head piteously*). Could they manage an anchovy sandwich and a glass of dry champagne?

[*Enter Waiter.*

SIR RICHARD. Anchovy sandwich, and a small bottle of the best dry champagne.

ADMIRAL. Do you know, Kato, I feel that an anchovy sandwich and a glass of champagne would just keep me going till lunch.

SIR RICHARD. Anchovy sandwiches for two, and a large bottle of the best dry champagne.

[*Exit Waiter.*

ADMIRAL. My appetite is something remarkable.

HARABIN. I haven't made a decent meal for months.

ADMIRAL (*very sympathetically, again points to Harabin as to a martyr*). Ah! there it is, you see. A woman runs away from her duties. What happens? Everything goes to rack and ruin! A man's meals, a man's health, all his little home comforts and luxuries completely sacrificed!

HARABIN. What did Sue say about meeting me, Kato?

SIR RICHARD. Well, the fact is, Jim, I—I believe Mrs. Quesnel is talking very kindly about you. And, perhaps, if Lady Darby were to go over to Sue and help the negotiations, we might induce Sue to come over to lunch and make it up.

LADY DARBY. I'll go and see what I can do. But really, there is no excuse for a man—

ADMIRAL. No, my love, none whatever! And when I think—(*Much affected, breaks off.*) Go and put it very nicely to her, dear. I'll come over as soon as I have had my anchovy sandwich, and we'll go for a nice little stroll together, shall we? Ah! how this place reminds me of old days!

[*Much affected again.*

LADY DARBY. Don't be foolish, Jo.

[*Exit at door.*

ADMIRAL (*as he closes the door after her*). There goes the best woman in England! Ah, Jim, it's a great pity for you young men that the good old stamp of English girl and wife is getting extinct!

[*Enter Waiter with a tray of anchovy sandwiches, and a bottle of champagne; pours out three glasses.*

ADMIRAL. What do you think of English women to-day, Kato?

SIR RICHARD. I have met with some of all sorts.

[*Admiral comes up to table, takes up a glass of champagne. Harabin sits and looks gloomily in front of him.*

ADMIRAL (*glass in hand*). You've had a great deal of experience in the marriage question.

SIR RICHARD (*taking glass*). Outsiders' experience — yes.

[*Exit Waiter.*

ADMIRAL. What is to become of society — (*Drinks.*) — A very good glass of champagne, Kato! What is to become of society if women insist on turning everything topsy-turvy, eh?

[*Takes an anchovy sandwich.*

SIR RICHARD (*drinks*). I don't know. Have a glass of champagne, Jim.

[*Giving champagne to Harabin, who takes it moodily and gloomily, and sits holding it in his hand without drinking.*

[*During the following scene the Admiral helps himself very freely to champagne, and eats nearly all the plate of sandwiches. Harabin sits very moody and gloomy, scarcely touches one or the other.*

ADMIRAL. Where are we going, eh?

[*Eats a large mouthful of anchovy sandwich.*

SIR RICHARD. Ah, just so. Take a sandwich, Jim.

[*Gives a sandwich to Harabin, who takes it, makes a face at it, and sips a little wine, gloomily.*

ADMIRAL. That's what I ask myself. (*Another mouthful.*) Where are we going?

SIR RICHARD. Ah! Where are we? Well, I can afford to look on with the complacent curiosity of an intelligent rustic who sees the coach rattling down the hill at a devil of a rate with runaway leaders and no brake. I can only mildly speculate whether there will be a smash-up.

ADMIRAL (*very solemnly*). Kato, take my word for it, there will be a smash-up.

SIR RICHARD. I should n't wonder. Of what?

ADMIRAL. Of the marriage coach — if we men don't keep a tight hold of the reins. And a devil of a smash-up it will be!

SIR RICHARD. Ah! Thank God I 'm not a passenger!

ADMIRAL (*taking another sandwich*). Here 's an instance of it. (*Points to Harabin, who is toying with a sandwich and vainly trying to get a mouthful of it down.*) Jim has his little failings. But because a man has his little failings, is that any reason for his wife running amuck amongst all the conventions and proprieties of social life, eh? What 's your opinion?

SIR RICHARD. I have no opinion. I take no side. I merely watch the game.

ADMIRAL. And looking round, I ask myself where we are going, eh, Jim?

[*Takes another sandwich.*

HARABIN (*moodily*). I know where I 'm going. I 'm going to the dogs. Has Kato told you how they 've cheated and swindled me?

ADMIRAL. Who?

HARABIN. Everybody. My servants, my tradesmen, and confounded womenkind.

ADMIRAL (*sympathisingly, sandwich in hand*). Ah!

[*Points him out again as a martyr to Sir Richard.*

HARABIN. Why the deuce a man who has a perfect wife like I had, for Sue was as near perfection as possible, was n't she, Kato?

SIR RICHARD. You 're her husband. You ought to know.

HARABIN. She was. Perfect manners! Perfect taste! And the best of tempers! What on earth could induce me — ?

SIR RICHARD. The advantages and delights of a steady course of respectable monogamy are so many and so obvious, that I have never been able to understand how

any man or woman could possibly deviate from it for one moment.

ADMIRAL (*more sandwich*). If ever there was a jewel of a wife it's Lady Darby. God bless her! Here's her health. (*Drinks.*) I don't deserve her. She's too good for me. When I remember what an unfaithful rascal I've been, and the lies I've had to tell — the awful lies —

[*Is overcome with painful reminiscences and weeps.*

HARABIN. I never knew what a good wife was till Sue left me.

ADMIRAL (*getting very confidential, and a little maudlin*). You wouldn't believe me, Jim (*pawing Harabin affectionately*), if I were to tell you half of the particulars of my — unfortunate history. (*Crying a little.*) Of course, in these matters (*turning to Sir Richard, and taking him in*) we must all make great allowances for men (*Sir Richard acquiesces*), especially for sailors. How do you account for it, Jim (*suddenly brightening into great joviality and pride*), that the best Englishmen have always been such devils amongst the women? Always! I wouldn't give a damn for a soldier or sailor that was n't, eh? How is it, Jim?

HARABIN (*still absorbed in his own woes*). I don't know, and I jolly well don't care.

ADMIRAL. Yes. Taking all things into consideration I can forgive myself a good deal. But when all's said and done, nothing can disguise from me awfu' fac', Kato, that I have behaved like a disgraceful scoundrel, best of wives. (*Is again overcome, and weeps.*) And if I knew any possible way in which I could blot out the past, I'd do it freely and willingly. What would you advise me to do, Kato?

SIR RICHARD. In the absence of any possible amendment of conduct in the past, or any probable amendment of conduct in the future, I think a good display of hearty

repentance in the present is all that can be reasonably demanded from any man.

ADMIRAL. If I were to go down on my knees to her, I could n't express a thousandth part of the sorrow I 'm feeling at this moment.

HARABIN. If I can only get Sue to settle down comfortably again with me, I 'll reform and make a model husband for the rest of my life.

ADMIRAL. Ah, that 's just what I 've said to myself scores of times. And once or twice I 've kept my word — for a considerable period, I may say a very considerable period.

HARABIN. But I mean it. Never again! These last ten months since Sue left me, I 've had such a lesson of the treachery, the extravagance, and the heartlessness of womankind, that from this time forward I am fully determined I will never again — (*Enter Lady Darby.*) What does Sue say?

LADY DARBY. She says she 'll have nothing to say to you.

HARABIN. Very well. (*Resolutely takes hat, goes to door; suddenly stops.*) Lady Darby, do you suppose that — she refuses to return to me because — she has — introduced —

LADY DARBY. Oh no, you may make yourself quite easy on that point.

HARABIN. You 're quite sure?

LADY DARBY. Quite sure.

HARABIN. Very well.

[*Goes to door.*

SIR RICHARD. Where are you going, Jim?

HARABIN. To the telegraph office. You 'll bear me witness, Kato, how awfully cut up I was, and how thoroughly I had determined to turn over a new leaf. But now I feel justified in taking advantage of any course of conduct that may present itself.

[*Exit Harabin.*

ADMIRAL (*points to Harabin's exit as to that of a martyr,*

then turns to Lady Darby with resolute voice and manner). Where is Sue staying?

LADY DARBY. At No. 7, Marine Gardens, just opposite.

ADMIRAL (*with great resolution*). Take me to her.

SIR RICHARD. What are you going to do?

ADMIRAL. I'm going to bring her back to her senses. A woman has no right to shake the foundations of society in this way. I shall tell her very plainly that this kind of behaviour must be put a stop to!

SIR RICHARD. That tune won't do with Sue. Send her over to me.

ADMIRAL. But, my dear Kato—

SIR RICHARD. Send her to me. I shall handle her better than you will.

ADMIRAL. Very well. (*Turns to Lady Darby.*) Ah! What a comfort it is to have a wife of the good old-fashioned sort like you, Victoria!

[*Exeunt Admiral and Lady Darby, right. Sir Richard is left alone. Walks up and down, puzzled. A knock at door. Lucien enters.*

LUCIEN (*letters in hand*). I've looked through the letters, Sir Richard, and—

SIR RICHARD. Lucien, I've got a case that is puzzling me a great deal.

LUCIEN. Indeed!

SIR RICHARD. It may never come into court, but—it's puzzling me. It has just occurred to me that you might help me.

LUCIEN. Anything that I can do.

SIR RICHARD. It is concerned with the extraordinary practices of an English clergyman at Cairo. This English clergyman, the Reverend Samuel, it seems—I forgot his church—Saint—Saint Something. What are the English churches at Cairo?

LUCIEN. I don't remember.

SIR RICHARD (*still pretending to be puzzled*). Saint—ha,—you can't remember the English churches?

LUCIEN. No. I never went into one all the while I was there.

SIR RICHARD. Then I'm afraid you can't help me. So you never went to church at Cairo? Bad boy! Bad boy! You never went to church?

LUCIEN (*innocently*). No, not once. (*Suddenly remembers; shows a little alarm.*) Yes, I went the last Sunday night I was there. I remember now.

SIR RICHARD (*carelessly*). What was the name of the church?

LUCIEN. Saint — Saint — Something.

SIR RICHARD. What was the church like?

LUCIEN. The inside?

SIR RICHARD. Yes.

LUCIEN. The inside? (*Beginning to flounder.*) There was nothing remarkable about the inside.

SIR RICHARD. Was it a large church?

LUCIEN. Yes — rather — rather a large church — a medium-sized church — (*Catches Sir Richard's eye.*) You're pumping me!

SIR RICHARD. Pumping you, my dear boy? I only wanted to get a few particulars. If you don't care to tell me, it's of no consequence.

LUCIEN (*getting a little angry*). I'll tell you all I remember. There was an aisle, and — I've an impression, but I can't be quite sure, that there were large pillars — and — and — (*gets a little more confused under Sir Richard's glance*) — the sermon was a very long one.

SIR RICHARD (*looking at him*). Ah!

[*Enter Pybus at balcony.*

PYBUS. I beg pardon, Sir Richard, but if you will kindly help us a little, I think we might arrange some basis for our returning together to the Nest.

SIR RICHARD. Very well, Mr. Pybus.

LUCIEN. Good-bye, Sir Richard.

[*Offering hand.*

SIR RICHARD (*offering him the Times*). No, sit down. I want to have a little more talk about this long sermon. (*Pushes the Times into his hands and gently pushes him into the arm-chair.*) Now, Mr. Pybus.

PYBUS (*confidentially to Sir Richard as they go off at balcony*). If you would n't mind hinting to Elaine that if she could surround me with that necessary atmosphere —

SIR RICHARD. Ah!

PYBUS. Really, she does n't give me any impetus, any afflatus.

SIR RICHARD (*sympathisingly*). Ah! Ah! Come along. We 'll see about it.

[*Exeunt Sir Richard and Pybus by balcony.*

[*Lucien is seated behind the paper. Short pause. Enter Waiter, showing in Lady Susan. Exit Waiter. Lucien rises, puts down paper, comes to her.*

LADY SUSAN (*embarrassed*). My uncle sent for me —

LUCIEN. He 's outside in the garden. We 've only a few moments.

LADY SUSAN. No, no. (*Breaks away from him.*) Oh, you 'll go! You 'll be kind to me and go!

LUCIEN. I shall do what you tell me, if it is to kill myself.

LADY SUSAN. How can you talk so rashly?

LUCIEN. Because I mean it. I 'll go if you tell me. It will be a harder parting than the last, but I 'll do it. It will break my heart, but I 'd rather break my heart with longing for you than win all the other women in the world. (*Her face shows great pleasure.*) You need n't think you 'll have any trouble in getting rid of me.

LADY SUSAN. You 'll break *my* heart if you talk like this.

LUCIEN. You love me still?

LADY SUSAN. Is there any need to ask that? And you — you love me still?

LUCIEN. I 've never loved any woman but you. I never shall if I live a thousand years. You don't know how

you have sweetened all my life. Those weeks at Cairo! They're like a splendid dream. All's dull grey with me now for the rest of my life.

LADY SUSAN. All's dull grey with me for the rest of my life. What am I saying?

LUCIEN (*clasps her, takes her hand, sees ring on it*). The ring I gave you. (*Kisses her finger.*) Give me something in return.

LADY SUSAN. Will you leave me then? Oh, this is madness. You'll go? You'll go? Oh, promise me!

LUCIEN. If you bid me.

LADY SUSAN (*taking off a ring*). Here's a ring Uncle Dick gave me ten years ago. I've worn it ever since. You'll never part from it?

[*Takes ring off finger and gives it to him.*

LUCIEN. Never.

[*Takes it, is about to put it on his finger.*

LADY SUSAN. No, don't put it on now. Uncle Dick would recognise it. Put it on the moment you have left me, and wear it always.

LUCIEN. Always. To my last breath.

LADY SUSAN. You'll never speak of me?

LUCIEN. I have never breathed your name to a living soul from the moment I left you. I never will. Don't you see, I cannot speak of you? I must hide you. I shall hide you in my heart till I die.

LADY SUSAN. And I shall hide you in my heart till I die. (*Looking off at balcony.*) We've only a moment.

LUCIEN. One moment in all our lives.

LADY SUSAN. Good-bye.

LUCIEN. Good-bye. (*Clasping her.*) No! I can't give you up! Sue, we belong to each other. I'll give my whole life to make you happy.

LADY SUSAN (*struggling in his arms*). No, no! I dare n't! I dare n't! What will become of me?

LUCIEN. Trust me. You're mine already. You can't trust me more than you have trusted me. You shan't

deny me! You shan't cheat yourself and me of all that makes life worth living. I cannot leave you! I will not!

LADY SUSAN (*desperately*). What can I do? What can I do?

LUCIEN. Meet me to-morrow night at eight — the Continental mail, Cannon Street Station. We'll go over to the Continent. You'll come? You must! You shall!

LADY SUSAN (*desperately*). Yes. (*He takes her hand, kisses it.*) Hush!

LUCIEN. To-morrow night — Cannon Street Station.

[*She nods.*

[*Enter Sir Richard at window. Lady Susan and Lucien show a little confusion. Sir Richard looks keenly from one to the other and back again.*

SIR RICHARD (*in a very calm matter-of-fact tone*). Lucien, I've been consulting the time-tables, and I find if you leave to-morrow morning by the eleven o'clock train, you'll have time to make those inquiries for me about the clergyman in Cairo, and still catch the boat on to New Zealand.

LUCIEN. I'm very sorry, Sir Richard; it's impossible.

SIR RICHARD. Not a bit, my dear boy. Now go back to Eastgate at once, up to town by the two-fifteen, dine with me at Brooks's to-night at eight, and off you go to-morrow morning at eleven.

LUCIEN. I'm very sorry — I can't.

SIR RICHARD. I'm very sorry, but you can, and you will.

LUCIEN. I've certain things to do.

SIR RICHARD. And certain things to leave undone. (*Very sternly.*) Come, sir, you leave at eleven to-morrow.

[*Very firmly.*

LUCIEN (*more firmly*). No.

SIR RICHARD (*still more firmly*). Yes, I say, yes.

LUCIEN. But I —

SIR RICHARD. But I say yes. (*In a very kind but firm tone.*) Come, my lad, understand me, I mean it. Off

you go. (*Opens the door, stands with it open.*) Pack! Pack! Pack!

(*Lucien has a moment or two of indecision, exchanges one last agonised look with Lady Susan, and then is about to rush off. Sir Richard at door intercepts him, offers his hand. Lucien, after another moment's indecision, takes it and wrings it. Sir Richard returns it cordially.*)

There's a good lad!

(*Lucien rushes off. Sir Richard closes door after him; comes to Lady Susan, with great decision. Very resolutely.*)

Now, my very dear Sue, I'm going to have a little talk with *you.*

LADY SUSAN (*a little alarmed, a little cowed, a little defiant*). What about?

SIR RICHARD. It's time this pretty little escapade of yours was ended. People are beginning to talk about you, and you've gone just as far as it's possible to go without running the risk of becoming déclassé.

LADY SUSAN. Déclassé? There are plenty of women who are not good, and who are not déclassé.

SIR RICHARD. Very likely. Women are divided into two classes.

LADY SUSAN. Good and bad.

SIR RICHARD. Not at all. Those who have lost their reputation, and those who have kept it. I'm determined you shall keep yours.

LADY SUSAN. Thank you, my dear Uncle Dick. I've kept my reputation, such as it is, up to now, and I assure you, it's quite safe in my keeping for the future.

SIR RICHARD. Very likely. But I'm going to make sure of it.

LADY SUSAN (*provokingly*). Oh, indeed! And how will you do that?

SIR RICHARD. Your husband is here. He's anxious for you to return to him and your home.

LADY SUSAN (*defiantly*). I've told you, no, no, no.

SIR RICHARD. Very well. Then, my dear Sue, as I've seen nothing of you for the last ten months, suppose you come on a little visit to me.

LADY SUSAN. When?

SIR RICHARD. At once. This afternoon, by the four-thirty.

LADY SUSAN. No. I'll come in two or three weeks.

SIR RICHARD. What are you going to do in the meantime?

LADY SUSAN. Do? Nothing.

SIR RICHARD. Where are you going?

LADY SUSAN. Going? Nowhere.

SIR RICHARD. You're going to stay here?

LADY SUSAN. Yes — of course.

SIR RICHARD. How long?

LADY SUSAN. Just as long as I feel inclined.

SIR RICHARD. Very well. I'll come and stay with you.

LADY SUSAN. You can't. There's no room in the house.

SIR RICHARD. I'll get rooms next door.

LADY SUSAN. What for?

SIR RICHARD. Just to be near you.

LADY SUSAN. It's ridiculous. Impossible!

SIR RICHARD. Not a bit. My dear girl, make up your mind that, at all costs, you're going to have my company for the next few weeks.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed I won't. I won't have you in my house. I'll turn you out.

SIR RICHARD. I'll stay on the doorstep. Understand me, my dear Sue, I shall haunt you like your shadow, and there will be no escaping from me. Now you know what is in store for you, so behave like a good girl and give me a hearty welcome.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed, I won't. I'll run away from you. (*Getting into a temper, walking up and down with great indignation, uttering little cries.*) Really! Of all the absurd — Well! — What next! — I never —

Oh! (*Turns round and faces him, very resolutely.*) Now, Uncle Dick, I love you very much, but don't drive me to kick over the traces.

SIR RICHARD. My dear Sue, I'm going to take very good care that you don't.

LADY SUSAN. Really, of all the unwarrantable— (*Bursts into a fit of angry laughter.*) Once for all, understand me, Uncle Dick, I'm my own mistress, and I'm going to do just as I please.

SIR RICHARD. No, my dear Sue, you are going to do just what is suitable for my niece, and for an English lady with her own reputation and the reputation of her family to consider.

LADY SUSAN. No, I'm not. I'll—I'll—(*Bursts into a fit of angry tears.*) I'll do something that will make you horribly ashamed of me. I will, Uncle Dick. I'll—

[*Steps up to him, is about to snap her fingers at him.*

SIR RICHARD. Ah! (*Catches her hand and puts it down.*) My dear Sue, you may snap your fingers at your husband, but you must not snap your fingers at me!

LADY SUSAN (*struggling to get her hand*). I hate you, Uncle Dick! I hate you!

[*Stamping her foot at him.*

SIR RICHARD (*complacently*). Very well, my dear Sue. Hate me as much as you please, but understand there are the three proverbial courses open to you, and one of those three proverbial courses you'll take, and no other. Firstly, you can return to your home with your husband—

LADY SUSAN (*defiantly*). No.

SIR RICHARD. Or, secondly, you can stay here in my very delightful and constant company.

LADY SUSAN. No.

SIR RICHARD. Or, thirdly, you can return to Harley Street with me, and I'll give you a comfortable home as long as you please. Which of these three courses will you take?

LADY SUSAN. Neither! Neither! Neither!

[*Enter Harabin at door.*

HARABIN (*coming in*). I say, Kato — (*Sees Lady Susan.*) I beg your pardon.

[*Beats a hasty retreat, shuts the door after him.*

SIR RICHARD (*in an alarmed tone to Lady Susan*). For heaven's sake, Sue, don't be a fool!

LADY SUSAN (*frightened*). What do you mean?

SIR RICHARD. I'm trying to save you. Take care that Jim —

[*Stops.*

LADY SUSAN (*still more frightened*). Jim does n't know?

SIR RICHARD. Not at present. But take care. One false step and you 're lost.

LADY SUSAN. Lost? What do you mean? What do you know?

SIR RICHARD (*very solemnly*). The sermon was a very long one!

LADY SUSAN (*in an agony of fright*). Uncle Dick, I've done nothing wrong. You believe me, don't you? There was n't even so much as an innocent flirtation. There was n't, indeed! You believe me, don't you?

[*Very much agitated.*

SIR RICHARD. Yes, I believe you, but — (*very mysteriously*) appearances!

LADY SUSAN (*in an agony of fright*). Appearances? Appearances? What appearances?

SIR RICHARD (*very solemnly, very mysteriously*). That last Sunday evening at Cairo!

LADY SUSAN (*frightened*). E — h?

SIR RICHARD (*very decidedly*). Which of the three courses will you take?

LADY SUSAN (*in a quiet, humble voice*). I'll go back to Harley Street with you.

CURTAIN

(*Fifteen months pass between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE. *At Sir Richard Kato's in Harley Street. Very snug bachelor's apartments, handsomely furnished. Door right. Door left. Fireplace at back. Window in corner, up left. A winter evening. Lamps are lighted. Large fire burning.*

Discovers Kirby showing in Inez, in handsome winter dress and fur cloak.

KIRBY. I'll tell Sir Richard you are here, ma'am.

[*Exit Kirby. As Kirby is going out, Lady Susan enters, right.*

LADY SUSAN. Dearest, I heard your voice.

[*Kisses her.*

INEZ. I've been out all day. When I got home, I found a note from Sir Richard asking me to come round.

LADY SUSAN. You're to take me out to dinner this evening.

INEZ. Oh! Then Sir Richard has a family party?

LADY SUSAN. Yes, my husband is coming. So of course I must go.

INEZ. Why must you go?

LADY SUSAN. Why should I stay?

INEZ. Why shouldn't you? Is there any particular reason that you shouldn't meet your husband?

LADY SUSAN (*considering the matter, in an indifferent tone*). N—o. But on the other hand, is there any particular reason that I should?

INEZ. You don't hate him?

LADY SUSAN (*indifferently*). N—o.

INEZ. You love him? (*Lady Susan shakes her head.*) Just a little bit.

LADY SUSAN. Not a *tiny little* bit.

INEZ. You don't dislike him?

LADY SUSAN (*same careless, indifferent tone*). No. Rather the reverse. The longer Jim and I are parted, the more I find a mild sort of liking for him stealing over me.

INEZ. Why won't you meet him and talk things over? He would give guarantees for the future.

LADY SUSAN. Really I don't wish to demand anything so unreasonable.

INEZ. Unreasonable?

LADY SUSAN. Considering what the creatures are, is n't it rather unreasonable of us to demand faithfulness from men?

INEZ (*after a little pause, with considerable feeling*). I know one man who was faithful.

LADY SUSAN (*sighs*). Well, perhaps there is one in a million. Yes, Inez, I do believe there is one in a million. But no woman has ever married him!

[*Enter Sir Richard.*

SIR RICHARD. How d' ye do?

[*To Inez, shaking hands cordially.*

LADY SUSAN. She has done her duty, Uncle Dick.

SIR RICHARD. What duty?

LADY SUSAN. Begged me to stay and dine with my husband.

SIR RICHARD. Oh!

LADY SUSAN. And as that is impossible, she will now do the further duty of taking me to dine at the Bristol, and to the Lyceum afterwards.

[*Enter Kirby with card, which he brings to Sir Richard.*

LADY SUSAN. Come, Inez, I 'll dress and come back with you.

[*Takes Inez off.*

SIR RICHARD (*to Kirby*). Show Mr. Jacomb up.

[*Exit Kirby.*

LADY SUSAN (*shows interest, stops at door, comes back*). Jacomb? Is n't that the man — who —

SIR RICHARD. Yes, that's the man who — You'd better stay.

LADY SUSAN. It's no business of mine. Inez, this is some man who has met that Mr. Lucien Edensor in New Zealand, and —

[*Enter Kirby, announcing Mr. Jacomb. Enter Mr. Jacomb. Exit Kirby.*

LADY SUSAN. Very well, Uncle Dick. As you seem to wish it, I will stay.

JACOMB (*a genial, rosy old fellow, about sixty*). Sir Richard Kato? (*Sir Richard bows.*) I'm glad to meet you. (*Shaking hands.*) As I wrote, I have a message for you from Mr. Lucien Edensor, and also one for Lady Susan Harabin.

LADY SUSAN (*startled, a little agitated*). For me? Impossible!

JACOMB. And one for Mrs. Quesnel.

INEZ. For me?

SIR RICHARD (*introducing*). Mr. Jacomb, Mrs. Quesnel, Lady Susan Harabin.

[*They bow.*

LADY SUSAN (*agitated*). I'm quite sure you can have no message for me. (*Seeing that Sir Richard is watching her. To Sir Richard*). What message can he have for me?

SIR RICHARD. Let's hear.

(*Motions her to a seat. She sits down so that her face is hidden from Sir Richard, Inez, and Jacomb, but quite in full view of audience. Motions Inez to a chair; stands so that he can just watch Lady Susan's face. She turns away from him.*)

Now we are all attention.

[*He moves a little forward so that he can again see Lady Susan's face. She again turns a little farther away from him. During the following scene he watches her very closely, constantly edging to get her face in view.*

JACOMB. A year ago last September I sailed for New Zealand with my brother Frank and his wife and daughter, his only daughter. Frank, I must tell you, is the head of Jacomb, Perrin and Co. You may know the firm?

SIR RICHARD. New Zealand shippers, a very first-rate firm.

LADY SUSAN. But what has all this to do with me?

SIR RICHARD. Let's hear.

JACOMB. Well, on board there was a young fellow, Mr. Lucien Edensor. I noticed that he seemed very home-sick, poor fellow.

[*Seeing that Sir Richard is watching her, Lady Susan pretends to be bored, gazes at ceiling, yawns, etc.*

LADY SUSAN (*with assumed indifference*). Did he?

JACOMB. Yes; would n't eat, would n't talk, would n't play poker, would n't make chums, would n't do anything. Well, one night, over a cigar and a glass of whiskey, I drew him out, and of course it was all about a woman, poor fellow.

SIR RICHARD. All about a woman! Poor fellow!

LADY SUSAN. All about a woman! Poor fellow!

[*Yawns, looks at ceiling.*

JACOMB. His heart was broken, life was a hopeless blank, and he 'd a great mind to end it there and then —

LADY SUSAN. Indeed!

JACOMB. Well, I took him into Frank's private cabin, and Mrs. Jacomb and Annie seemed to take a great fancy to him.

LADY SUSAN. Did they?

JACOMB. And to make a long story short, the next day, just for the sake of whiling away the time on board ship, I made a sporting bet of fifty pounds with my brother Frank that there would be a match between his daughter Annie and young Edensor.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed! (*Same tone.*) Did you win?

JACOMB. You shall hear. My wife and I set to work, and from morning till night we did nothing but lay our heads together to bring it off. You would n't believe how interesting it was to watch them.

LADY SUSAN. It must have been. What was the result?

JACOMB. He held out. He could n't forget this other woman. (*Lady Susan hides her face from those on stage; shows great delight.*) Yes, he held out, for over three weeks. (*Lady Susan's face changes.*) I thought I should lose my fifty pounds.

[*Sir Richard is most keenly watching Lady Susan all the time.*

INEZ. And at the end of three weeks —

JACOMB. He began to thaw. My fifty pounds was safe.

LADY SUSAN. You seem to have been alarmed for your fifty pounds.

[*Rather pettishly.*

JACOMB. It was n't the money. I could n't bear to be beaten. I would n't have lost that bet for a thousand pounds. I was determined he should marry her.

LADY SUSAN. And — did he?

JACOMB (*fumbles in his overcoat pocket, brings out three little parcels tied round with white satin ribbon, looks at the addresses*). I promised him I 'd deliver these in person.

[*Offering one to Lady Susan.*

LADY SUSAN. For me? What is it?

SIR RICHARD. Open it.

[*Lady Susan takes parcel, opens it, pulls out a letter and the ring she had given him in Act II; shows great pain. Meantime Jacomb has given the other two parcels to Inez and Sir Richard respectively; they have taken them and opened them, finding in them tiny pieces of wedding cake.*

INEZ. Wedding cake! Why should Mr. Edensor send wedding-cake to me?

LADY SUSAN. Or to me?

[*Takes Lucien's ring off her finger, puts it in the box, wraps letter round it, goes up to fireplace.*

SIR RICHARD (*nibbling*). Very good wedding-cake it is, too. Won't you try it, Sue?

LADY SUSAN. You know I never eat sweets.

[*Throws box and all into the fire.*

INEZ (*putting hers in pocket*). I'll sleep with mine under my pillow.

SIR RICHARD. And so they married and lived happy ever afterwards. (*Putting his parcel on table at back.*) Why didn't Lucien write and tell me?

JACOMB. He said you had chaffed him so much about the other one, and he didn't like you to know that he'd changed his mind so soon.

LADY SUSAN. So soon! But he was three weeks. He must have been genuinely attached to the other woman to have held out for so long as three weeks. What is your niece like?

JACOMB. I'd forgotten. I've a photograph of them taken together. (*Pulling photograph out of his breast pocket.*) There they are—

[*Showing Sir Richard the photograph.*

SIR RICHARD (*looking*). He looks confoundedly happy, the rascal!

JACOMB. Never was a happier couple in this world!

LADY SUSAN. Will you allow me? Is your niece fair or dark?

JACOMB. Rather fair, Lady Susan, and she's a sweet-tempered little body.

LADY SUSAN (*looking at photograph*). H'm, so she seems. Such women make the best wives. And Mr. Edensor held out for three weeks against those attractions. How could he? (*Giving back the photograph.*) Thank you. Very interesting.

JACOMB (*taking photograph*). Well, I've delivered my message, Sir Richard.

SIR RICHARD (*rings bell*). Thank you, Mr. Jacomb. I 'll write Lucien and tell him I 've received it safely.

JACOMB (*shaking hands*). Delighted to have made your acquaintance. Good day, Mrs. Quesnel. Good day, Lady Susan.

[*Lady Susan and Inez bow. Kirby appears at door.*

SIR RICHARD. Kirby, remind me to send half-a-dozen of that old Madeira to Mr. Edensor in New Zealand. The door.

JACOMB (*going off*). You can't believe what trouble I had to make him understand he was in love with her. But I landed him! I landed him! And I won my fifty pounds!

[*Exit left, followed by Kirby.*

LADY SUSAN. I must go and dress, Inez.

INEZ. I 'll come with you, dearest.

LADY SUSAN (*pettishly*). No, go and dress at home, and come back for me, and we 'll dine at the Savoy, shall we?

INEZ. I don't mind.

LADY SUSAN. Yes, and we 'll go to something merry and rakish, not to a tragedy. I hate tragedies.

[*Exit Lady Susan. Sir Richard opens the door for her. He closes the door after her; stands perplexed.*

INEZ. What 's puzzling you?

SIR RICHARD. Mrs. Quesnel, what was the exact nature of Sue's acquaintance with Lucien?

INEZ. What does it matter? You need n't trouble about Sue. We women know the value of appearances. We are awful cowards, and have terrible leanings towards respectability. Sue won't shatter Mr. Harabin's family gods on his family hearth, or burst up Mr. Harabin's family boiler with any new-fangled explosive. And so long as Mr. Harabin's family boiler remains intact, why should you meddle with Sue? I must go and dress. My cloak, please.

SIR RICHARD (*helping her on with cloak*). It 's a brutal

night. I wish you were going to stay and dine with us. How well you look in furs!

[*He sighs.*

INEZ. Why do you sigh?

SIR RICHARD. Alas! My family gods! My family hearth! My family boiler!

INEZ. What of it?

SIR RICHARD. There's no one to tend it!

[*Pointing to his fireside.*

INEZ. And no one to burst it up.

SIR RICHARD. It would n't burst up if it were in the right person's care.

INEZ (*mischievously*). Ah, but who would be the right person?

SIR RICHARD. Yourself, for instance.

INEZ. I would n't play tricks with the safety-valve.

[*Going.*

SIR RICHARD (*taking her hand*). Stay. Would you really undertake the charge — of — (*pointing to hearth*) — my family gods and my family boiler?

INEZ. That depends. First of all I should like to know a little about the previous engineers. You are terribly concerned about Sue. How about yourself?

SIR RICHARD. Won't you trust me?

INEZ. No, I won't. You're a sensible man. I'm a sensible woman. I don't expect you to have lived till — How old are you?

SIR RICHARD. Say forty-five — it's a few years more, but say forty-five.

INEZ. Till forty-five without having loved. But I should like to know —

SIR RICHARD. What?

INEZ. Well, some particulars.

SIR RICHARD (*walks about, a little perplexed*). You don't want to know everything?

INEZ. No, not everything. But a good deal.

SIR RICHARD. If I tell you the leading outlines quite

truthfully, will you tell me the leading outlines quite truthfully?

INEZ. Yes. How many times have you really loved?

SIR RICHARD. Only once, and that is at the present moment.

[*Looking at her*

INEZ. Good-bye. I wanted to know the truth.

SIR RICHARD. Don't go. I will tell you — the truth.

INEZ. Honour? I really mean to be quite truthful with you.

SIR RICHARD. Yes, but I hope your case won't — won't —

INEZ. Won't be as bad as yours? Oh, no, it won't. Rest assured of that. No woman's case ever is as bad as a man's. Now go on.

SIR RICHARD. I've thought myself in love scores of times, but I've only really loved once, and that was — (*After a longish pause, with great feeling.*) I won't tell you. It's too sacred. I did love that woman with all my heart and soul. And she loved me.

[*Pause.*

INEZ. And those other scores of cases when you *thought* you were in love?

SIR RICHARD. Oh, they don't count.

INEZ. But I should like to get some — some general impression.

SIR RICHARD. What does it matter? There was a light girl —

INEZ. And a dark girl? Come, the whole catalogue.

SIR RICHARD (*rattles away, half seriously, half jestingly*). A light girl, a dark girl, a red-haired girl; a tall girl, a short girl; a merry girl, a sad girl; a lean girl, a fat girl; a girl in mauve, a girl in white, a girl in green; a blonde, a brunette; a girl with eyes as blue as heaven, and a girl with eyes as black as jet; a Quaker girl, a *danseuse;* a pale girl, a sallow girl, a rosy-cheeked girl; a peer's daughter, a milliner; a Scotch girl, an Irish

girl, an Italian girl; and — some others. You can't say I haven't made a clean breast of it.

INEZ. And you have thought yourself in love with all these? What does remain of your heart?

SIR RICHARD. All that doesn't belong to that one woman whom I did really love.

INEZ. Ah!

SIR RICHARD. Now it's your turn.

INEZ. Suppose I follow your example and lump them as you've done, and say that in vagrant hours I've had vagrant fancies for a light man, a dark man, a red-haired man; a tall man, a short man; a merry man, a sad man; a man in a blouse, a man in knickerbockers, a man in a kilt; a hunter in pink, and a bicyclist; a Scotchman, an Irishman, and — I won't say an Italian, but just to fill out the list I'll throw you in a couple of Spaniards, a Hindoo prince, and a young Japanese. Suppose I were to own up to all these?

SIR RICHARD. But, good heaven, you don't?

INEZ. No. But if I did?

SIR RICHARD. I should ask for further details.

INEZ. If I asked you for further details?

SIR RICHARD. I should decline to give them.

INEZ. And let me fill them in according to my wildest imaginations — let me guess how much of that spacious heart of yours was given to this stray companion, and how much to that stray companion. Ah, no, no, no, no! Let's draw a veil.

SIR RICHARD. But you haven't told me anything.

INEZ. I will. Sincerely I have loved once. And I should like to remain constant, if constancy were not such a dream.

SIR RICHARD. Is constancy a dream?

INEZ. What else is it? You have loved once, and yet with her consecrated image in your heart's holy of holies, you have opened its outer courts to a rabble of petticoats; broken the bread and drunk the wine with

sluts; tossed off life's sacrament with any strange priestess that offered it — look at the remains of the feast! Oh, no, no, no, my dear friend! if constancy is n't a dream, if faithfulness is n't a shadow, where are they to be found?

SIR RICHARD. Not in my heart. Yet I loved once. Thank God for it!

INEZ. And I have loved once. Thank God for it!

[*A long pause. They look at each other seriously, then smile, and then gradually laugh in each other's face.*

SIR RICHARD. To come back to —

INEZ. To Harley Street?

SIR RICHARD. And the previous question. What do you say?

INEZ. I'll think it over. (*Suddenly.*) Dear me! I've stayed here gossiping with you, and now, if I don't make haste, I shall be too late to get Sue away before her husband comes. My cloak! Quick!

SIR RICHARD (*helping her on with it*). You do look well in furs.

INEZ (*fastening her cloak*). Shall I tell you a secret? All women do.

[*She runs off. Sir Richard stands looking after her, blows a kiss after her, sighs, closes door, goes up to window, looks outside, draws curtain, takes out his watch, changes coat for smoking jacket, lights pipe, sits down at fire, sighs, looks at the fire, looks at the door where Inez has gone off, blows another kiss after her, pokes the fire.*

[*Enter Fergusson Pybus (shown in by Kirby), very pale and bilious; with a look of settled gloom on his face; a large black patch over one eye; carelessly and seedily dressed. Exit Kirby.*

SIR RICHARD. Good heaven, Mr. Pybus! what's the matter?

PYBUS. Have n't you heard? The Women's League —

my wife has got all the telegraph girls and shop girls in Clapham out on strike.

SIR RICHARD. Yes, so I see in the paper. Well?

PYBUS. I thought perhaps you might sympathise with me.

SIR RICHARD (*cordially*). I do. (*Shakes his hand.*) What's the matter with your eye? Not — not *domestic*, I trust?

PYBUS. No. Mr. Cupples, our butcher — (*Piteously.*) I'm in a state of extreme nervous prostration. Cupples —

SIR RICHARD. Yes?

PYBUS. Elaine persuaded Mrs. Cupples to join her Women's League. Cupples had been in the habit of spending his evenings at the King's Head. Last week the Women's League went round to the King's Head, and sung the League Marseillaise at Cupples, and then escorted him home. The next morning Cupples came round to the Nest and demanded an interview with me. I declined to see him; but he stayed outside, and as soon as I appeared, without waiting for me to disclaim all responsibility for my wife's actions, he took advantage of my state of nervous prostration, and —

SIR RICHARD. Pood fellow! Poor fellow!

[*Pats Pybus's shoulder sympathisingly.*

PYBUS. What would you advise me to do?

SIR RICHARD. With regard to Cupples? Do you owe him anything?

PYBUS. There is a little bill.

SIR RICHARD. What sort of a man is he?

PYBUS. He is a coarse powerful man, with a copious supply of very abusive epithets.

SIR RICHARD. I should pay him his little bill. Then I should utterly refuse to have anything more to do with him. I should cut him dead.

PYBUS. Ye — es. Perhaps that would be best. And Elaine?

SIR RICHARD. Where is she?

PYBUS. I left her at the Nest this morning, addressing the post-office girls from my bedroom window, and urging them to make an example of the Clapham postmaster. Sir Richard, you might have warned me of the nature of Elaine's temper.

SIR RICHARD. Ah! Did n't I mention something about tempers?

PYBUS. At the time I became engaged to her my prospects were most brilliant. If she had given me the least afflatus, I feel sure I should have stamped myself on the age in some way.

SIR RICHARD. I'm sure you would!

PYBUS. But so far is she from giving me any afflatus, she will not even give me a light and easily assimilated course of diet. I cannot nourish my peculiar gifts on tinned mutton of the cheapest brands, and the more stringy portions of an underdone ham.

SIR RICHARD. Ah! Did n't I mention something about cooking lessons?

[*Enter Kirby with evening paper.*

KIRBY. I beg pardon, Sir Richard, I thought you might like to see —

[*Giving paper.*

SIR RICHARD. What?

KIRBY (*pointing to article in paper*). The Clapham post office has been completely wrecked by the telegraph girls on strike.

[*Exit Kirby. Pybus groans and turns round in his chair.*

SIR RICHARD (*reading*). "Progress of the strike. The Clapham postmaster, put to flight, takes refuge in a coal cellar. Destruction of telegraphic communication with Clapham."

PYBUS (*looks up piteously*). Am I liable?

SIR RICHARD. Somebody will have to pay the piper. And as your wife called the tune —

[*Pybus groans. Re-enter Kirby.*

KIRBY. Sir Richard, Mrs. Pybus has come in (*Pybus jumps up*) and says she must see you at once.

PYBUS. Go and remonstrate with her, Sir Richard, and ask her — (*Elaine enters; Pybus sees her, has a furious outburst*) — ask her what the devil will be the end of all this damned silly behaviour!

[*Exit Kirby.*

ELAINE (*looks Pybus up and down with the utmost contempt*). The old weapons! Abuse and brute force! No other argument!

PYBUS (*rather more mildly*). So it is — a damned silly —

[*Growls the end of the sentence under his breath to himself.*

[*Elaine, merciless, contemptuous, looks at him. He meekly subsides into his chair.*

ELAINE (*turns to Sir Richard*). When to-day's revolution is complete, it will no longer be *safe* for men to swear at their wives.

SIR RICHARD. I shall be sorry to note the disappearance of another picturesque old custom.

ELAINE (*severely*). Please do not trifle. You have doubtless followed the recent course of events in Clapham —

SIR RICHARD. Yes. You seem to have been using a great deal of brute force with that poor devil of a postmaster.

ELAINE. It was the only argument he could understand. I have called to make a formal demand for the remainder of my fortune. (*Pybus jumps up.*) I have immediate use for it.

SIR RICHARD. What use, may I ask?

ELAINE. To accelerate the progress of the new epoch.

PYBUS (*protesting*). Sir Richard —

ELAINE (*just glances at Pybus, then turns her back contemptuously on him*). We had perhaps better discuss this matter apart from Mr. Pybus, as it is no concern of his.

PYBUS (*appeals*). Sir Richard—

SIR RICHARD. Tsch! tsch! tsch! We won't discuss it at all. Rest assured I shall not hand over your fortune for any such nonsense.

ELAINE. Nonsense! He calls our new epoch nonsense!

PYBUS (*venturing*). So it is! Damned silly, idiotic—

[*Elaine looks fiercely at him. He mutters and subsides.*

ELAINE (*to Sir Richard*). You will find that we are in earnest.

SIR RICHARD. About what?

ELAINE. About re-organising society.

SIR RICHARD. I don't quite follow—how will wrecking Clapham post office re-organise society?

ELAINE. We must make a start somewhere.

SIR RICHARD. Begin at home, in your own lives. There's no other way of re-organising society. Go back to the Nest, and give Mr. Pybus a nice comfortable dinner.

ELAINE. No man shall receive dinner from me while the present inequalities between the sexes remain unredressed.

SIR RICHARD (*to Pybus.*) We shall all starve.

ELAINE. Please be serious. Do you deny that Woman has been most shamefully treated by Man?

SIR RICHARD. It isn't Man that's ungallant to Woman. It's Nature that is so ungallant and unkind to your sex.

ELAINE. We will correct Nature.

SIR RICHARD. By changing your sex? What is it you ladies want? You are evidently dissatisfied with being women. You cannot wish to be anything so brutal and disgusting as a man. And unfortunately there is no neuter sex in the human species. *What do you want?*

ELAINE. We want freedom to develop our real selves.

SIR RICHARD. Hum—sounds like a deadly dull, unwholesome process. Still, for my part, you are quite welcome. But if that is your ideal, why did you marry Mr. Pybus? I don't see that he is necessary.

ELAINE. Mr. Pybus is not necessary. (*Pybus jumps up protestingly.*) There is an immense future for Woman—

SIR RICHARD (*interrupting*). At her own fireside. There is an immense future for women as wives and mothers, and a very limited future for them in any other capacity. While you ladies without passions—or with distorted and defeated passions—are raving and trumpeting all over the country, that wise, grim, old grandmother of us all, Dame Nature, is simply laughing up her sleeve and snapping her fingers at you and your new epochs and new movements. Go home! Be sure that old Dame Nature will choose her own darlings to carry on her own schemes. Go home! Go home! Nature's darling woman is a stay-at-home woman, a woman who wants to be a good wife and a good mother, and cares very little for anything else. (*Elaine is about to speak, Sir Richard silences her with a gesture.*) Go home! go home, and don't worry the world any longer about this tiresome sexual business, for, take my word, it was settled once for all in the Garden of Eden, and there's no more to be said about it. Go home! Go home! Go home!

ELAINE (*furiously*). Sir Richard, you are grossly indelicate!

SIR RICHARD (*blandly*). I am. So's Nature. (*Cheerfully.*) Now I must go and dress for dinner.

[*Re-enter Kirby with another paper in his hand.*

KIRBY. Beg pardon, Sir Richard. Latest edition. I see there's a warrant issued for the apprehension—

[*Indicating Elaine. Elaine shows great consternation.*

ELAINE. Not for me?

KIRBY. Yes, ma'am.

[*Exit Kirby.*

PYBUS. There, you see. I thought your Women's League—

ELAINE. Silence. This is my affair. (*To Sir Richard.*) Do you think they will send me — away?

SIR RICHARD (*paper in hand*). It looks uncommonly like it.

ELAINE. How long — do you suppose?

SIR RICHARD. The ringleaders at Birmingham got eighteen months.

ELAINE (*in a fright*). Eighteen months!

SIR RICHARD. Of course I shall defend you, and I shall do my best to get you off lightly. But you must take great care in the meantime, and, above all, no public speaking.

PYBUS. And she 's such a good public speaker.

ELAINE. I cannot sacrifice my principles, nor will I be muzzled.

SIR RICHARD (*angry*). Then, frankly, I won't defend you.

ELAINE (*after a pause, has a great inspiration*). I will defend myself!

SIR RICHARD (*horrified*). Defend yourself! Don't talk such nonsense. You 'll get five years.

ELAINE. The longer the better. Our cause demands a martyr. I will surrender to-night. Please ring the bell.

[*Pybus rings the bell with great alacrity.*

SIR RICHARD. You silly woman! Do you know what you are doing?

PYBUS. Sir Richard, do please let her know what is best for herself.

ELAINE. If I defend myself, I shall be allowed to speak?

SIR RICHARD (*sarcastically*). Oh, yes!

[*Kirby appears at door.*

ELAINE (*to Kirby*). A hansom at once, please. I have a message for this age!

[*Exit proudly in a glow of martyrdom, followed by Kirby.*

SIR RICHARD (*having watched her off*). Good heaven!

How is it that women never will understand the Woman question? (*Turns to Pybus.*) What do *you* intend to do?

PYBUS. I shall now return to the Nest. It is not naturally a noisy spot, nor are the inhabitants of Clapham an unruly class, except when they are incited by seditious persons. I may now perhaps be able to stamp myself upon the age.

SIR RICHARD. I dare say.

PYBUS (*going off at door, turns*). Sir Richard (*very nervously*), in view of a period of quietude at the Nest, I really think it advisable for my wife to conduct her defence in person. (*Looking very imploringly at Sir Richard.*) I do, indeed. (*Continues to look very imploringly at Sir Richard. Sir Richard at length cordially grasps his hand.*) Thank you. Thank you.

[*Exit Pybus, delighted, as Lady Susan, in handsome evening dress and cloak, re-enters by the other door.*

SIR RICHARD (*looking at her, takes her hands*). You look very handsome, Sue. Hillo! then you've found my ring!

LADY SUSAN. Yes, it turned up the other day.

SIR RICHARD. Where?

LADY SUSAN (*a little confused*). Oh, I was turning over some old rubbish, and there it was.

[*Sir Richard looks at her keenly; her eyes drop, and she goes to the window, draws aside the curtain, discovers a thick fall of snow outside.*

SIR RICHARD. What a night! Why do you insist on going out to dine?

LADY SUSAN. Why do you insist on asking people to dinner whom I cannot possibly meet?

[*Enter Kirby, showing in Harabin. Kirby announces Mr. Harabin. Exit Kirby.*

LADY SUSAN (*very indignantly*). Uncle Dick!

HARABIN. I beg pardon. I see there's a mistake.

[*Goes back to door.*

SIR RICHARD (*stopping Lady Susan at door, right, calls across to Harabin*). Harabin, one moment. It's my fault. Let me frankly apologise to both of you. (*Getting Lady Susan down stage, driving them nearer to each other.*) First of all, let us own there has been a mistake. And now the mistake is made, let us make the best of it. (*To Harabin.*) Lady Susan is dining out with Mrs. Quesnel, but as Mrs. Quesnel has not arrived, naturally Lady Susan is obliged to wait. (*Getting them nearer to each other all the time. To Lady Susan.*) Mr. Harabin is dining with me. He has come a little too early, but I am sure you wouldn't wish me to send him out on such a night as this. (*Drawing her closer to Harabin.*) Therefore he is obliged to wait. And so as you are both here, don't you think you could manage — I won't say to entertain each other — but to endure each other's company for a few minutes? And if there is any little natural disinclination to make each other's acquaintance, let me give you a formal introduction. (*To Lady Susan.*) Mr. Harabin, a gentleman whose profound attachment and admiration for you has been steadily growing for the last two years. (*To Harabin.*) Lady Susan Harabin, who I'm sure in her heart has no violent dislike for you. (*Suddenly.*) I must go and dress for dinner.

[*Bolts off very hurriedly, right, leaving them together. The two stand looking at each other in an embarrassed way for some moments. Then Lady Susan sits down, takes up an illustrated paper. Pause. Harabin sits down.*

HARABIN. It's extremely cold.

LADY SUSAN. Extremely.

HARABIN. There's every indication of a very heavy snowfall.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed.

[*Longish pause.*

HARABIN. I have never seen you looking so remarkably well.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed.

HARABIN. Really beautiful. I hope you don't think me rude in making remarks on your personal appearance.

LADY SUSAN (*in an indifferent tone*). No.

HARABIN (*with great politeness*). Would n't it be advisable to take off that heavy cloak while you remain in this hot room?

[*Lady Susan rises and slips it off.*

HARABIN (*rushing towards her*). Allow me. (*By the time he gets to her the cloak is off. Reproachfully.*) You might have permitted me the honour —

(*Lady Susan reseats herself with great composure and turns over the newspaper. He remains standing over her rather embarrassed. At length bursts out.*) Confound it, Sue, you might have a little pity on a poor devil!

LADY SUSAN. I cannot allow you to call me by my Christian name. If you do, I shall be compelled to wait in another room.

[*Pause.*

HARABIN. But do talk to me.

LADY SUSAN. What is there to discuss?

HARABIN. Ourselves — at least, yourself. Sue, do put down that paper.

LADY SUSAN (*rising, going toward door*). I told you I should go if you called me by my Christian name.

HARABIN. Let me open the door for you.

[*He goes hastily after her; she goes to door, tries to open it.*

LADY SUSAN. Uncle Dick has locked the door!

[*He again comes towards her; she goes towards the door on left.*

HARABIN. No, don't go. (*Places her a chair with great politeness.*) Do sit down again. (*She sits.*) I can't

tell you how much I've suffered during your absence.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed.

HARABIN. And I've thoroughly determined to be the best of men in the future.

LADY SUSAN. I'm sincerely glad to hear it.

HARABIN. You might give a fellow a little encouragement.

LADY SUSAN. Encouragement?

HARABIN. To be good. No man can be good unless a woman encourages him.

LADY SUSAN. And not many men even then, it seems.

HARABIN. I could be very good if you were to encourage me a little. Sue — (*Lady Susan rises.*) Lady Sue — Lady Susan — (*He offers her the chair; she sits down.*) You have never really understood me.

LADY SUSAN. No.

[*Looks at him attentively.*

HARABIN. I'm not at all a bad sort of fellow. You don't know how awfully sorry I am for the past. And I'm really devoted to you.

LADY SUSAN. Indeed.

HARABIN. It's a beastly night outside. You'll only catch a bad cold if you go out. I say, Sue; let's all have a jolly comfortable dinner together, and let bygones be bygones.

[*Pause. Lady Susan considers.*

LADY SUSAN. On both sides?

HARABIN. Yes, on both sides. Of course there are no — no bygones on your side?

LADY SUSAN. Of course not. I suppose there are a good many on your side?

HARABIN. Eh? Eh? Well —

LADY SUSAN. You seem unwilling for me to touch upon your bygones.

HARABIN (*embarrassed pause*). I assure you I'm not a bad sort of a fellow. And I've cherished your image throughout.

LADY SUSAN. Throughout a course of flirtations with all sorts of women?

HARABIN. Oh, not a course — and not all sorts. I assure you — there's nothing for you to trouble about.

LADY SUSAN. What do you mean by "nothing"?

HARABIN. Well, well — oh, very well, let bygones be bygones.

LADY SUSAN (*placidly*). Very well.

HARABIN. You will? I can't tell you how delighted I am that you've forgiven me.

[*Is about to embrace her.*

LADY SUSAN. Stay. We are to take each other for better or worse, as we did when we were married, and the past is never to be once mentioned between us?

HARABIN. Never. You've forgiven me, haven't you?

LADY SUSAN. Yes.

HARABIN. Very well, what more is there to be said? (*With sudden alarm.*) Sue —

LADY SUSAN. What?

HARABIN. You — you haven't — been — flirting with anyone in the meantime?

LADY SUSAN. I thought the past was not to be mentioned —

HARABIN. No. But —

[*Shows great uneasiness.*

LADY SUSAN. I see, we had better remain strangers. I'll wait in the next room.

[*Going.*

HARABIN. No, no, Sue, of course I trust you. But perhaps it would be best to have a thorough understanding once for all. Then we shall never have occasion to return to the subject again. Now! Have you anything to tell me?

LADY SUSAN. Have *you* anything to tell *me?*

HARABIN. Well — of course — (*Stops, then suddenly.*) Perhaps you'd better begin, as — yours will be so much simpler. The whole truth, mind.

[*Listens in deadly earnest, impatiently.*

LADY SUSAN. One evening at Cairo —

HARABIN (*eagerly*). Yes —

LADY SUSAN. I 'd been playing a nocturne of Chopin's in the dusk —

HARABIN. In the dusk? Where?

LADY SUSAN. In the drawing-room.

HARABIN. The public drawing-room?

LADY SUSAN. Yes. And as I finished —

HARABIN. Yes —

LADY SUSAN. Signor Massetti, the musician, who was staying in the hotel, started up from a chair at the back — I did n't know he was in the room —

HARABIN (*fiercely*). Well —

LADY SUSAN. And — Don't look so ferocious —

HARABIN (*maddened*). Go on! Go on!

LADY SUSAN. He kissed —

HARABIN. Kissed you?

LADY SUSAN. My hand.

HARABIN. Your hand?

LADY SUSAN. Yes — several times.

HARABIN. Did he? Did he?

LADY SUSAN. Yes; don't be in such a temper. He 's quite an elderly man.

HARABIN. So much the worse.

LADY SUSAN. And devoted to music.

HARABIN. I dare say, the old blackguard! How many times did he kiss your hand?

LADY SUSAN. Five or six.

HARABIN (*tortured*). Five or six!

LADY SUSAN. Yes, but I 'd really played very well.

HARABIN. The old scoundrel! And — what did he say?

LADY SUSAN. I forget exactly.

HARABIN (*fiercely*). You forget?

LADY SUSAN. He complimented me on my playing.

HARABIN. Yes, but — what else?

LADY SUSAN. Nothing. That 's all.

HARABIN. All? Really? Really, really all?

LADY SUSAN. All until I 've heard all you have to tell me. (*A long pause*). Come. Aren't you going to begin?

HARABIN. I 'm so much upset about your flirtation.

LADY SUSAN. You 're not upset about your own — flirtations?

HARABIN. Yes, I am. I feel quite a touch of remorse when I remember them.

LADY SUSAN. My dear Jim, you don't feel anything like so much remorse for your own transgressions as you do for mine.

HARABIN. Naturally not. (*Goes to her very solemnly.*) Will you give me your word, your sacred word of honour, that it went no further than a kiss on the hand with this confounded old Signor What 's-his-name?

LADY SUSAN. My sacred word of honour, it went no further than a kiss on the hand with Signor Massetti.

HARABIN (*looks at her, much relieved*). I 'm glad to hear it. And there 's nothing else?

LADY SUSAN. Yes, a good deal.

HARABIN (*bristling up furiously*). A good deal! (*Fiercely.*) Go on! Go on! What else is there?

LADY SUSAN. There 's all your side.

HARABIN (*relieved*). We 'll finish with your side first. I must insist on knowing —

LADY SUSAN. You must insist! (*Laughs at him.*) My dear Jim, don't be absurd. If it comes to that, I must insist on knowing, first of all, this: when I was a good, faithful wife to you, why did you run after other women? Secondly, how have you employed yourself the last two years? And thirdly, how are you going to make me confess what I will have my tongue cut out rather than I will confess — that is, if there were anything to confess?

HARABIN (*tortured*). If there were anything to confess! — then there is n't anything to confess?

LADY SUSAN. I don't say that.

[*Harabin takes two or three desperate turns about the room, in agony.*

HARABIN. Very well. I *had* thoroughly determined to be the best husband in England for the future.

(*Kirby shows Admiral Darby and Lady Darby in at door. Exit Kirby.*)

Yes, madam. You have lost the greatest chance of happiness that was ever offered to a woman on this earth, and you have wrecked my whole future.

ADMIRAL (*seizes him gently*). Shake down! Shake down! Shake down!

HARABIN. Let me go, Sir Joseph!

[*Tries to get off.*

ADMIRAL (*turns him round*). Shake down! Shake down! Shake down!

HARABIN. I wanted to let things shake down. I've wanted to let them shake down for the last two years. But she won't let them.

ADMIRAL. Now, Sue, how is it that you won't let things shake down?

LADY SUSAN. I'm quite willing to let things shake down, but he won't let them.

ADMIRAL. Now, Jim, how is it you won't let things shake down?

HARABIN. You can't expect me while—

ADMIRAL. While what?

HARABIN. While she won't tell me—

ADMIRAL. What?

HARABIN (*fiercely at Lady Susan*). How many elderly musicians kissed her hand in Cairo!

ADMIRAL. Sue, how many elderly musicians kissed your hand in Cairo?

LADY SUSAN. Only one, and Mr. Harabin knows all about him.

ADMIRAL. There you are, Jim. Only one, and you know all about him. Now shake down.

HARABIN. Very well — only — (*very uneasy*) — then — there — there was — only one?

LADY SUSAN (*very coldly*). Will you give me my cloak, Uncle Jo? Aunt Vic, we'll wait in the drawing-room.

HARABIN. No — no!

LADY DARBY (*stopping her*). Mr. Harabin, you don't suppose that Lady Susan during her absence from you has done anything that needs to be concealed?

HARABIN. Certainly not. Certainly not. But still — [*Looks very uneasy. The lock of the door, right, is heard to turn. Enter Sir Richard in evening dress.*

SIR RICHARD. Sir Joseph, Lady Darby. (*Shaking hands with them. To Lady Susan.*) Well, how do we stand now?

LADY SUSAN. As we were.

HARABIN. Sir Richard, I wish to ask Lady Susan one solemn question in the presence of you all.

LADY SUSAN. My dear Jim, I shall never answer it.

HARABIN. Then am I to think — ?

LADY SUSAN. Just whatever you please to think.

[*Harabin goes in great distress to Sir Richard.*

HARABIN. Kato, one moment. (*Draws Sir Richard down stage. Admiral and Lady Darby expostulate with Lady Susan.*) Sue won't say whether she has anything to confess, unless I confess everything to her.

SIR RICHARD. Very well. Confess everything to her.

HARABIN. Oh! that's impossible, you know.

SIR RICHARD. You don't suppose there's anything to confess on Sue's side?

HARABIN. No, I feel sure there is n't. But I should like to know. What shall I do?

SIR RICHARD. Sue looks very handsome.

HARABIN. Exquisite! Exquisite!

SIR RICHARD. I should stretch a point or two rather than send her out in the snow when you can have a cosy dinner with her here and — make it up.

[*Enter Kirby showing in Inez, in evening dress.*

KIRBY (*announcing*). Mrs. Quesnel.

INEZ. My dear Sue, ten thousand apologies. It's an awful night, and I couldn't get a cab. But—

[*Looks at Harabin, then looks inquiringly at Lady Susan.*

KIRBY. Shall I serve dinner, Sir Richard?

SIR RICHARD. Lay for six instead of four, and then serve.

[*Exit Kirby.*

LADY SUSAN. Come, Inez. I'm quite ready.

HARABIN. No, don't go, Sue. Sir Richard—

[*Appeals to Sir Richard.*

SIR RICHARD (*goes to Lady Susan*). Sue, can't you give Mr. Harabin some assurance—

LADY SUSAN. I've told him that bygones shall be bygones, and I will be a good faithful wife to him, if he will be a good faithful husband to me. He can take me or leave me on those terms.

SIR RICHARD (*looks very earnestly at Lady Susan for some moments*). I think, Jim, your happiness will be quite safe in her hands.

[*Takes her off very affectionately.*

HARABIN. I intend to be the best of husbands in the future. I'll give you my word—

LADY SUSAN. Your word of honour, as a gentleman?

HARABIN (*very quickly*). Yes! My word of honour as a gentleman.

LADY DARBY. Why didn't you forgive him at first, Sue, and save us all this trouble?

LADY SUSAN (*sighs*). I wonder why I didn't.

LADY DARBY. You see, dear, we poor women cannot retaliate.

LADY SUSAN. I see.

LADY DARBY. We must be patient and forgive the wretches till they learn constancy.

LADY SUSAN. I see.

LADY DARBY. And, dear, yours is a respectable average case after all.

LADY SUSAN. Yes, a respectable average case after all.

[*Enter Kirby.*

KIRBY. Dinner is served, Sir Richard.

[*Exit Kirby.*

SIR RICHARD. Take your wife in to dinner, Jim.

[*Harabin gives his arm to Lady Susan.*

ADMIRAL. Victoria, I have only another fortnight on shore. Give me the pleasure and the honour of taking in to dinner the best woman and the best wife in England! (*Lady Darby gives her arm to Admiral.*) Ah, Victoria! when I remember —

LADY DARBY. That 's enough, Jo. Don't be foolish.

ADMIRAL. I can't help it. My conscience troubles me. Some day, when I can summon courage, I will endeavour to tell you —

[*Takes her off very affectionately.*

LADY SUSAN. Uncle Dick, have you ever had a love affair of your own?

SIR RICHARD. Just one.

LADY SUSAN. You never speak about it.

SIR RICHARD. It 's too sacred.

LADY SUSAN (*sighs*). Ah! We don't speak of the most sacred things! (*To Harabin.*) Now, sir, your arm, and don't forget I 'm going to be a good wife to you.

HARABIN. I won't. How well you look, Sue! I 'll take you down Bond Street to-morrow morning and buy you — the whole street! I 've never loved you so much as I do at this moment.

LADY SUSAN. How long will your love last? For three weeks?

HARABIN. For three weeks! For life!

LADY SUSAN. Are you sure? Love me, Jim! I want to be loved!

[*Exeunt Lady Susan and Harabin.*

SIR RICHARD (*to Inez*). Then I must take you?

INEZ. I don't see any alternative.

SIR RICHARD (*more puzzled than ever*). What *was* there between Lucien and Sue at Cairo?

INEZ. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

SIR RICHARD. Yes, but that sermon was a very long one! Do women ever tell the truth about their little love affairs?

INEZ. Do men?

SIR RICHARD. No wise man ever tells.

INEZ. No wise woman ever tells.

SIR RICHARD. I wonder —

INEZ. Wonder at nothing that you find in the heart of a woman, or the heart of a man. God has put everything there.

SIR RICHARD. Let us leave these problems (*kisses her hand very tenderly*) and go in to dinner.

[*Gives his arm to her. Curtain falls as they go off.*

DATE DUE

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Jones, Henry Arthur, 1851-1929
Representative plays